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ABSTRACT

This publication tells the stories of contemporary Alaskan women who have contributed to the state's economic, social, and political development, and who may serve as role models for younger women in need of inspiration. It also attempts to illustrate the relationship between personal empowerment and societal change. The book contains 12 lengthy question-and-answer profiles, 43 shorter profiles, and 12 open letters from Alaskan women in leadership roles, addressed to younger women. The subjects were chosen with an eye toward regional and racial balance, and with an appreciation for the leadership roles played by the "ordinary" women who make communities function. The stories are those of a Norwegian immigrant to Alaska; a Native health aide in a remote village; an educator incorporating the language and traditions of her Inupiat people into school curricula; Episcopal priests ministering to village residents; a Black teacher from the Deep South arriving in a Native settlement; a Native magistrate observing the transition from tribal law to White law; a Native healer; an organizer in the Native land claims movement; and women active as environmentalists, state and local administrators, politicians, school board members, businesswomen, educators, and journalists. The book includes photographs, blank pages for personal journal entries, a list of women elected to the Alaska legislature, and comments of members of the Alaskan Commission on the Status of Women. (SV)

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Profiles in Change:
NAMES, NOTES AND QUOTES FOR ALASKAN WOMEN

Alaska Commission on the Status of Women

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Special tribute ..... Inside back cover

The Alaska Commission on the Status of Women contracted with Ginna Brelsford of Anchorage to research, write and design this publication for Alaska's women.

The 1981 Alaska Legislature appropriated funds for the project. House Finance Committee member Rep. Thelma Buchholdt of Anchorage said:

"Since very little has been written about Alaskan women who have contributed to our state's economic, social and political development, during the 1981 session I set aside funds for this women's political leadership project."

The publication is designed to include both the stories of Alaskan women and journal pages on which the reader can record reflections and impressions. It is divided into 12 sections, loosely matching the 12 months of the year. Each section includes:

- a special large photo, intended to help illustrate the diversity of Alaskan women;
- a lengthy question-and-answer profile of a woman selected as one of 12 with the most — or most interesting — things to say;
- a series of shorter profiles describing more women; and
- an open letter from an Alaskan woman in a leadership role addressed to younger women — sometimes to daughters or friends, sometimes to no one in particular.

At the end of the publication are comments from members of the Alaska Commission on the Status of Women, and a tribute to women elected to the Alaska Legislature.

Profiles in Change:

NAMES, NOTES AND QUOTES FOR ALASKAN WOMEN

Researched and written by Ginna Brelsford

© 1983, Alaska Commission on the Status of Women

Edited by Steve Lindbeck

Graphic design by Carolyn Fleshman

Author's introduction

Connie Taylor intimidated me. She is an imposing woman — physically strong, emotionally secure, personally persuasive. It was 10 p.m. at the end of a long day of interviews in a strange town, and she wanted to know: "What is this WOMEN's stuff?"

I gave her my explanation of this project — "it's supposed to tell the stories of Alaskan women who've brought about change" — and we talked about her life as the first woman seine boat captain in Prince William Sound. The discussion wasn't very successful. I was tired and she was skeptical; I had a midnight ferry to catch and she had a printing business to run; I was seeking her innermost thoughts and she was wondering what might happen if she parted with them.

We chatted awhile, both questions and answers coming out guarded, noncommittal. My self-doubt and her reticence only grew until somehow I reached inside for the lesson dozens of women all over Alaska had been teaching me: that what women do is real, and important, and worth knowing about. What I had to do was use that lesson to confront Connie Taylor with the failure of this interview — and to face up to it myself.

The logjam broke. "I don't know what you really wanted to hear," she began, "but . . ."

The words that followed, about fishing and business and women and independence and accomplishment, revealed a remarkable woman doing remarkable things — things that, sure enough, were real, and important, and worth knowing about.

Without quite knowing it, I had carried out the very purpose of this publication: I'd found something inside myself that enabled me to change my world for the better, at least in a small way.

The concept of the publication was to provide a platform, if you will, for working out the relationship between personal empowerment and change in society. The medium was to be a journal-calendar book in which stories about Alaskan women were interspersed with blank pages for readers to record their own ideas and reflections. Its message was to be one of inspiration for other women, especially younger women, who might see themselves in the roles described, and who might be encouraged by the success of others.

Going inside myself for strength worked for me not only that rainy night in Cordova. It worked one snowy morning in Barrow when I didn't know a soul; and one windy afternoon in Bethel when I encountered local suspicions of a stranger asking questions; and for a whole month back home in Anchorage when a hundred tensions pressed me back against the final deadline.

The original ideas behind this publication were that women make change in many ways; that by seeing other women doing things we learn we are not alone; that by reflecting on our own values we challenge ourselves to unravel our hopes, our fears, our ideals, our cynicism, our inspiration and our anger; and that if we try, we can channel those things into constructive action.

I began this project the last week of June, 1982, with a survey letter asking more than 250 people and organizations to nominate women for the publication. The response then, as throughout the project, was overwhelming: I received more than 300 names from every corner of Alaska. The next 5½ months became a flurry of travel, interviews (85 in all), writing, editing, photography and organization.

Nearly everything in the book has been edited heavily — shortened and distilled from the mass of tapes and transcripts that emerged from hundreds of hours of interviewing. I have written brief introductions, and included my own questions and promptings where dialogue is appropriate. But for the most part the words are those of the women themselves, for it was decided very early that improving them — particularly with so many stories to deal with — would be practically impossible.

Women included in the book were chosen for their diversity, their uniqueness, their messages, sometimes their courage. They were chosen with a careful eye toward regional and racial balance, and with an appreciation for the leadership roles played by the "ordinary" women who make communities function. They are nearly all women whose inner force allows them to make personal and political change.

These women discuss the ways they've improved their homes, their communities, their state. Magnhild Lee talks about the life of a Norwegian immigrant in Petersburg; Sadie Neakok offers a magistrate's view of the transition from tribal law to white law in Barrow; Beryl Johnson shares her understanding of democracy and responsibility in Anchorage; Charlie Mae Moore — a black woman whose children speak Yupik — tells of landing in Chevak as a 25-year-old teacher fresh from the Deep South. Women talk about survival and loneliness, self-love and self-hate, fortitude and endurance, creativity and feminism. There is a sense of leadership in them all. In working on this project, they often have been my guides and my friends.

Acknowledgments

I remember keeping a diary, a journal, when I was a little girl living in a family with four brothers. That journal was my own special place — a treasure only I knew about, where I could keep my "truths" locked inside. I hid it, always afraid one of the boys would find it, read it and make fun of me. Those diaries were my best resource for working out the turmoil I felt as I grew up and realized I was indeed different from my brothers, that the rules were different for boys and girls.

I wonder what I would have written in those diaries if I had known then what I know today about being a woman in our world, and in Alaska. Dating back to pioneer days, journals and diaries have been the way many women told their stories, kept their truths, understood their lives. That gift to oneself — recording one's thoughts, one's children's lives, one's families' events, one's work and play — is still alive today.

I hope this publication is an opportunity for that gift to occur for you. It is, as I said before, about personal empowerment and change. It is a tapestry of lives woven together to show the female side of Alaska, a means of discovering the changes many women have made and the strength to be gained from their stories. It is an offer to read these stories, write about our own joys and pains, explore our actions and beliefs . . . to go inside and discover the gifts, talents and spark within each of us.

— Ginna Brelsford
Anchorage, Alaska
Dec. 15, 1982

A project like this requires a great deal of support — personal, political, spiritual and, not least, financial. I shall be forever grateful to hundreds of Alaskans who provided that support when it was needed.

The heroes of this project are the women who so patiently and openly discussed their lives with me. They took many risks: entrusting to me valuable, personal information about their experiences and feelings. They put up with my constant hurry, gave their understanding, and contributed their stories to Alaska's women. Each one of them is worthy of much more attention than they receive here.

Former state Rep. Thelma Buchholdt made this project possible by securing a $20,000 grant from the legislature for the Women's Political Leadership Project. She deserves immediate thanks for this project, and enduring thanks for her commitment to developing Alaskan women as leaders of our state.

My partner and editor Steve Lindbeck first encouraged me to take up this challenge — then worked hard throughout to help shepherd it to completion. He spent endless hours editing, challenging, organizing, rewriting, offering a balanced perspective, and bringing the project together as a whole.

Carolyn Fleshman joined this endeavor in its final stages and offered her skills, her time and her commitment. She spent countless hours with the graphics, layout and design of the publication. Its appearance has been improved immeasurably by her special talents and care.

Glenna Haggard patiently sifted through tapes and somehow transformed them into transcripts.

Dozens of people and organizations met me at airports, fed me, lodged me, helped me, introduced me to their friends, gave me support and encouragement and, ultimately, believed in me. In no particular order, they are:

Betsy McGuire, Darlene Sambo, Leslie Goss, Heidi Lee, Chris Johnson, Rob Stapleton, Jo Ryman Scott, Laurie Otto, Deb and Joe Hilderbrand, Libby Roderick, Fran Durner, Holli Ploog, Barbara Hodgin, the Lindbecks, Jeanne Fortier, Beauty Lemons, Ann Nevaldine, Kathy Jones, Diane Tickell, Aegea, Lucy Frey, Lisa Rudd, Arliss Sturgulewski, Kay Reese, Bertha Moses, Esther Wunnicke, Amy Bollenbach, Ruth Burnett, Thelma Buchholdt, Ramona Kolenut, Rosita Worl, Mahala Ashley Dickerson, Lidia Selkregg, Alaska Commission on the Status of Women staff Katie Hurley, Christine Callahan, Kathy Keisor Wisthoff and Laurie Anderson, commission members Barbara Schuhmann, Barbara Dale, Evalee Azar, Pat Berkley, Mary Anne Henry, Dorothy Jones, Roxane Lee, Fr. Jim Poole, Carla Timpone and Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry, RuralCAP, Petersburg Shipwrights, Visible Ink, the Cordova Women's Resource Center, and all the people who took time to nominate women for this publication.

Photo by Rob Stapleton

'I think the biggest battleground is not in the legal field; it is on a personal level. It is how a woman relates to a man at home. It has to do with how jobs are divided in the home, how the children will be raised. It is learning how to say sometimes, 'I need me more than I need a man'.'

— Fran Ulmer, attorney
Juneau

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Beryl Johnson:

'I am a searcher'

Patriotism and public life come together for Justine Beryl Johnson, a lifelong Alaskan born in 1919 in Skagway.

She is past president of the Anchorage chapter of the League of Women Voters and has served on the state Transportation Policy Planning Council. She is an avid Democrat and political campaigner.

In Anchorage, she is married, the mother of two and known as a mentor and friend to many young people. Her understanding of history and her vision of the future enrich the perspective of young people around her. She challenges them with her commitment to and understanding of public policy, political reality and citizen responsiblity.

• • •

The Equal Rights Amendment was recently temporarily defeated. Given this reality, where do you think our nation's women are heading?

I do not believe, in spite of the ERA, that they (Congress, men) will be able to bounce back to where we were. I think that we have too good a foothold, I think the battle is going to be harder, and it is going to be slower. This particular administration, of course, with its indifference to affirmative action programs, will slow things up.

I think that men are finding that they are getting a monkey off their back, too: they are no longer expected to carry the burdens of the nation as well as carry a lot of women along with them.

I do believe that the only thing they can take away from us is the right to control our bodies. If they take the pill away from us or whatever contraceptive means we have now, and the right to choice, then they could probably put us back. If we cannot control the number of children we have and we cannot control pregnancy, then we might find ourselves way back.

What are the pertinent issues facing Alaska women in the 1980s?

Women are still not into the power structure. We are still on the outside; this is a very macho state. Who controls the power and who controls the money? Women do not have anywhere near the buying and purchasing power that men have. We are still in the lower 50 percent of income, and men still control business.

The two prime industries in our state are oil and fisheries — these are very macho businesses. Anybody could look at the higher echelons of any one of the oil companies and realize who has the power; likewise for the fishing industry, with the processing and fishermen. We are just begging when it comes to money. We are still licking the envelopes and doing the addressing: we are doing the dirty work, the slave work.

Given your political involvements with the League of Women Voters, transportation issues and political campaigns, what has been your most significant experience with change ?

The first time I felt any kind of power was when →

'I had a friend who said I should read 'The Feminine Mystique,' by Betty Friedan. I said, 'Forget it; I don't need anything that tells me how to keep my floor shiny.'

— Alice Johnstone, borough assembly member, conservationist
Sitka

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I was president of the League of Women Voters in Anchorage in 1968. It was the power of the organization. It developed the expertise the community respected, it spoke with an authenticity that I enjoyed and benefited from, and it opened doors for me that would not have opened in some other organization. It opened the kind of doors I was interested in walking through, which were the

'I am a searcher. I am searching in my religion, I am searching in my politics and I am searching for the answers in my society. I do not think I have the answers and all I ever get is a piece of it.'

areas of government and direct contact with the business community. I became aware that a group of women could command respect when we did our homework.

So, you would say that women have a specific contribution to make?

Yes. It has to do with values other than the highly competitive. I don't see any real value in women loving highly competitive sports if the end result is that we are just learning how to climb on somebody's back to get where we want. If women move into traditionally male roles (and I would say that we are) and if we don't bring the values that women have nurtured in the home into the marketplace, then society is in trouble. I believe those values that we as women, as mothers, as parents, as homemakers, as housewives consider important, are important — to the health of our society.

How would you describe your influence?

I am very issue-oriented. I am not too perceptive on a one-to-one basis, not too perceptive of personality problems. I go into a group, I do not pick up the vibes very well; I am too busy thinking about the issues we are going to deal with and not the vibes of the personalities in the room.

There is always, of course, a little ego involved. But there is a good type of ego satisfaction when a job is well done. The satisfaction I get is that I have performed well but not that I have benefitted personally, that I am going to get some new appointment.

I know that the talent I bring to a job is that I am a generalist and I have the ability to synthesize: to hear a great deal, have it all fed into me, and then to synthesize it and direct it into channels of action.

You see, my first love is government and policy. I am basically a flag-waving patriot in the sense that I think we have the most fabulous system in the world and I am afraid that I am not talking about our economic system — which I have some serious problems with — I am talking about our political system, I am talking about democracy. I am a fierce Democrat and am alarmed at the indifference that this country is showing to its political system, the lack of concern and lack of involvement we are teaching our young people astounds me.

I am not talking about the flag-waving War of 1812 or other battles; I am talking about the Bill of Rights, and how and why our country is built the way it is . . . the separation of powers and what it means . . . the strength and integrity of our institutions. What are the significance of these things?

It is important that you get involved. I don't mean necessarily over at the assembly building. Anything you do that strengthens the life of this community, of your community, of your state, of your nation and your world is contributing to that whole system — which demands engagement to function well.

I think you should become involved in some area that you care about, that you will retain as much activity as possible. It is important to be as honest in your activities as possible, for honesty will require objectivity, which in turn requires good, clear action.

Part of being honest is to no longer apologize for my emotional involvement in issues. Today I think you must care not only intellectually; you must be emotionally involved. I no longer apologize if my face gets a little bit flushed (in a committee hearing) and if my voice gets a little bit positive and strong. I don't let anyone say, 'Oh, that is just a woman being emotional . . .' and there is nothing wrong with a man who cares deeply and is doing a good thing on a job and cares for it emotionally; it just shows you care a lot.

Can you characterize anything in particular which motivates you to make change?

I was raised as a Presbyterian, and it comes right out of my church. It comes out of the responsibility I was taught that if you were given so many talents it is your responsibility not to bury them and waste them. It is a monkey on your back because you never rest in the sense that you can't turn your back on what are so-called responsibilities. You have to admit that if you have any brains and any abilities, you have to use them.

It starts way back there. I have also been aware of what I think of as a fault: I cannot work in an organization, for instance, working in the abused people's shelter on a one-to-one basis. I will work to set it up, I will work to improve the transportation for everybody and things like this. I admire those people who can do the one-to-one, and who can handle the crisis line. I simply cannot do it. I am very tough intellectually and very soft emotionally. I am aware of that and so I don't get into those situations I am not going to handle well.

Was there any particular person in your family who had a lot of influence on you?

No question about it that my father was the →

'Worriness is a bad sickness, makes all people get sick.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

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strongest influence in my family because he was the strongest personality. He held his convictions the most. He was a strict disciplinarian, he held the values of the family most strongly and policed them most fiercely.

He was impeccably honest. Honest with his neighbor, honest with himself. He was a fierce Britisher, but at the same time he was a passionate defender of the United States. I have a different feeling about the U.S. than somebody who never had a foreigner as a parent. I did not realize that until I came across people who cannot understand questioning your country because they think it is unpatriotic. My father questioned his country and his adopted country.

Was it mainly your father who challenged your mind?

Yes. Dad read aloud to our whole family. He read constantly. Everybody in the family reads. Mother read, but not until she was 40 years old. She took care of the children and did not have time or energy. But at 40 she started to educate herself and did a wonderful job!

There was also a minister who influenced me. A young man was there (in Skagway) for five years during my most sensitive time, between the ages of 10 and 15. He encouraged our questions; he challenged us constantly. He challenged me and what I was reading because typically I was reading a lot of romance and he was presenting other books to me and discussing them with me. When he left, he invited me to come down and pick three books from his library. I picked Shakespeare, the Brothers Karamazov and the Romance of Leonardo da Vinci.

I have read radical political literature for 35 years because I was studying political science at the University of Washington and I was doing research for projects. I went to magazine sources of the '20s and '30s, and the most authentic sources I came across, the articles dealing most honestly with the subjects, were in The Nation. I started subscribing then and continue today. I always read critically.

'If women move into traditionally male roles (and I would say that we are) and if we don't bring the values that women have nurtured in the home into the marketplace, then society is in trouble.'

I had some very fortunate experiences at a time in my life when I might have been willing to follow radical movements. I met a fellow-traveler who was quite radical (and in the '30s this was quite difficult to do). He was a communist, a nice guy but he was a fundamentalist, as much a fundamentalist as the religious type. And in the early '50s I met a communist in Anchorage, a Russian communist who was stupid in his own field. I mean in his own obsession he was narrowminded and dogmatic. I realized also about the terrible excesses of Stalinism; I could never defend it. Once I was intrigued with what seemed to be the answers to the economic stresses of the world, to be answered by communism. I no longer think this way; I realize some communists are as much religious fanatics as any converts.

I am a searcher. I am searching in my religion, I am searching in my politics and I am searching for the answers in my society. I do not think I have the answers and all I ever get is a piece of it. That seems to be how I approach every job: searching for the answers. But I know they can't be found in one philosophy or place.

How has feminism affected you?

The feminist movement is a drive for facts and equality. Equality is for a woman in relation to the rest of society; it is a right for free choice for all women.

For me, one of the most rewarding things about the feminist movement is the fact that I no longer consider women a threat. I consider every strange woman a possible friend. Before, she was competition and a potential enemy.

How would you describe your awakening?

Through Betty Friedan's book, "The Feminine Mystique," and a course. She discussed a subject that all of a sudden was opening windows; doors were banging. It was absolutely exciting.

I started to relate to my friends in an entirely different way. I have friends who have never gone through the consciousness-raising session and I feel sorry for them. I think they are afraid to because it is unsettling. Everything shifts and you do feel wonderful, especially in my case where I had no intentions of threatening my marriage and yet I am. These questions are coming and John and I have had to work them out, but it's been good.

It (feminism) has brought new respect for me. I am standing on my own feet; I can always detect when I am leaning. Your mind never stops working and I demand a lot of myself, that I be as honest as I know how to be. When I have a reaction that I am ashamed of, when I am jealous and ashamed of it, I try to find out why I am ashamed. When I do things I am not proud of, I want to know why I do them because maybe I can't stop doing them but maybe I can understand them and forgive myself. I won't be so hard on myself.

You know, it used to be that when I was growing up and going to school my choice was to be a teacher or a nurse — those were the only role →

'As long as we live, we have an obligation to participate in the world around us. When I die, I will go with my boots kicking.'

— Dove Kull, founder of the Older Alaskans Commission, lobbyist
Juneau

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models — or wife and marriage. 'You must all be a wife, of course, that is the final goal;' or so I was told. I was right along with the others in horror of being an old maid.

That horror is lessening because a lot of women want children but they don't want the encumbrances of a marriage, and I understand that. I would never marry again, but I would not give up the opportunity of having children. The two happiest days of my life, no question about it — marriages be damned — the two happiest days of my life were the two days my children were born. Maybe it was because I didn't think I was going to have any, and I had them late; I was 38 when the second was born. But it was a totally female experience; it had nothing to do with men at all.

Yet when a young girl drops out of high school with no job, no skills and no mate to have a child, it is the most terrible tragedy I can imagine.

You know, when you use the term sexual revolution, and that is what you are going through, you need to have all your antennae out and be on your toes listening and being perceptive to what it is doing to you. Share the experiences; you need support.

The sexual revolution is a bit like the same thing that happened to our political structure; we see the attrition of both the Republican and Democratic parties and we see no new machinery moving in to take their place. How does democracy function without the supporting machinery and how does society function without the supporting relationships of the traditional family? What kind of support system do we need in building, or are we to simply allow everyone to flounder? The women's movement is a political force and we need to recognize that and use it.

I am an optimistic soul. I know many fine young people. I feel like I am surrounded with good young people. I am anxious for my generation to move over and get out. I think we have been here long enough, been in control long enough.

My generation went through two things: a depression and a terrible war. World War II was a terrible experience for us, and this combined with the depression left a mark on my generation that we have been trying to fix for more than 40 years. We have been going after security with a capital S and that has been our main struggle. Somehow we thought that material wealth was going to provide us the security that was taken away from us in 1932. Of course my conviction is that it does not give you any security at all. We have been in power too long; all we are doing is defending our past mistakes.

Our generation has accumulated wealth and showered it on our young people. Even the kid who does not have a job somehow has two bits for the video machine. It is wealth that we could not have; I tried to give it to my children and I could not give them the same feeling. The joy that I can still recall when my mother gave me a nickel; a joy that I just could hardly control because it was going to buy me a candy, and it might be the only candy I would get for ages. I can't give that to my children; they have no sense of material gratification.

We spoiled it for them. I would say that they cannot look for material gratification. Their generation is not going to get the same material satisfaction out of buying something that my husband and I do — because many of them have always had it. Their satisfaction is going to have to come from something different.

They are going to have to do a lot more searching for goals and maybe are not going to find them. Two things have happened: one is we have taken away material rewards and material gain, and the other is that the younger generation is in an entirely new field sexually. We have no experience to give them, we have no counsel and we can't help. They are really plowing new ground; they are the pioneers, the rebels, in the sexual revolution.

I am optimistic. I envy that generation. Did you ever come out and say to yourself, 'There isn't anything I can't do. There isn't any place I can't go, there isn't any job I can't tackle and there is nobody who can tell me I cannot be a doctor, lawyer, researcher, homemaker. It is just wide open.

Maybe the choices are too great and they are scary — the political field is wide open if you find it exciting. I think if we get a bunch of housewives in politics, the first thing we would do is manage money. The first thing you do is establish priorities in getting the rent paid and getting the food and clothes on the back of your family.

Three things are foremost — and it is the same for the home, community, city, state and nation. If you would take care of food, clothing and shelter, soon everything else would fall in place. ○

'I believe the only thing they can take from us is the right to control our bodies. If they take away whatever contraceptive means we have, and the right to choice, then they could probably put us back.'

'I try to capture the subtler aspects of the human figure. I love conveying that strength of women, the physical side to her.'

— Joan Bugbee Jackson, artist
Cordova

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Suzanne Iudicello:

'Money is power'

"Money is an important issue for women. It is not cool to be poor. I think women should not be afraid to make money, they should not be ashamed to ask for a lot of money when looking for jobs. Money is power. Our programs have always been poor; our directors have always been underpaid. It is because we do things out of the goodness of our hearts and because it is important and we are committed.

"That is bull. The only reason the directors of women's resource centers and rape crisis programs and women's shelters continue to live near the poverty level is because they are willing to be. You don't find directors in state government or the private sector making $20,000 a year with that kind of budget and responsibility.

"I think women who are labeled as selling out because they go take a good job with Arco, or they go to work for the state, women who are not in that space should not judge them. There are some very committed strong feminists who get bitter because they are knocking their brains out in the traditional structure trying to do new and different things and contribute thousands of dollars a year to women's programs and then get trashed on because they are not starving to death and working at the rape crisis center."

— Suzanne Iudicello, public affairs director Alaska Department of Fish & Game journalist, editor, women's activist

"The influence that kept me down for a long time was the fact that I grew up in a society in which women are very suppressed; it was all around me. I always felt on the fringes, my place was elsewhere. For a long time I tried to be a typical housewife with kids, cooking. I was never happy, but you don't think about it, because that is what you are supposed to be doing. You don't think about having to do it as a burden. The housework is a burden. It doesn't really register until much later.

"It is a struggle because part of me always wanted to be traditional. A Cinderella thing, a fairy tale indeed."

— Irene Ramirez

Photo by Steve Lindbeck

Irene Ramirez: 'a bit pushier'

Irene Ramirez worked hard to shatter the myth of Cinderella. She built a bridge to cross the gulf between her traditional Hispanic childhood and her active, political life in Anchorage today.

She grew up in South Texas in the 1940s, one of six girls in a traditional Hispanic family. Her father was an unskilled laborer who drove trucks for migrant workers. Her mother "was a saint, a housewife." She came to Alaska with her military husband, found work as a draftsperson, and stayed to become prominent in the political and cultural life of Alaska's Hispanic community.

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Do you have any sense of yourself as a double minority, being both Hispanic and female?

I am a little bit pushier than most women and a lot pushier than Hispanic women. We tend to be a subdued people. I was never made to feel I could not do anything because I was a girl until I was a teenager; then the rules started changing and I knew I was supposed to be subdued.

You were a main founder of Hispanics Inc. What is its purpose?

To help out those in need and to mostly foster our heritage.Somewhere along the line we discovered that we lost our heritage, so we are trying to get back into it and realize how rich a culture we have.

Do you have a message for other Hispanic women?

I hope that being the way I am will encourage other women, particularly Hispanic women, to get out and do things. There are a lot of good Hispanic women who would make a difference in this world. A lot of them would be good and would enjoy what they were doing if they would just make themselves get out there and do it. It holds true for a lot of women, regardless of race.

'I didn't know I was underprivileged until the missionaries told me.'

— Clare Swan, chief of Kenaitze Indian tribe
Kenai

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Diane Carpenter:

'sense how far you can go'

"I have always felt a strong need to influence my environment. I like to be part of constructive change. If it is coming — and it is — I want to help shape it. I don't want things to be done unto me."

Coping with change is one of the things Diane Carpenter does best.

Born and reared in Florida, she came to Alaska with her husband at age 20 and spent 10 years raising a family on an isolated homestead at Stony River. In Bethel, she was a prime mover in establishing Kuskokwim Community College, the Tundra Women's Coalition and a battered women's shelter. She served as finance chair for the Bethel City Council, and is today a humanities teacher at the community college she helped found.

She has made a career of teaching and politics on the Kuskokwim River delta — and she has grown committed to passing on the tools to deal successfully with change by shaping one's environment to a suitable form.

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What do women in Bethel face today and in the near future?

The economics of necessity are changing the lifestyles of just about everyone in the area. Women have to work even when they have small children. Many women here work in low-paying jobs, which makes transportation and child care a problem.

What's happening is that jobs are requiring more education than they used to and this (Bethel) is getting to be less and less of a Native community. When it was more a Native community, there were more Native values; Native ways of doing things were acceptable. Now, you go into stores, businesses or government and the person you are going to be working for is probably non-Native. Because of the expansion of jobs available here and the fact that those personnel were not available locally, more and more non-Natives are being hired for jobs because the people doing the hiring are more accustomed to white ways of operating. Natives are having to do a tremendous amount of adapting to be employable.

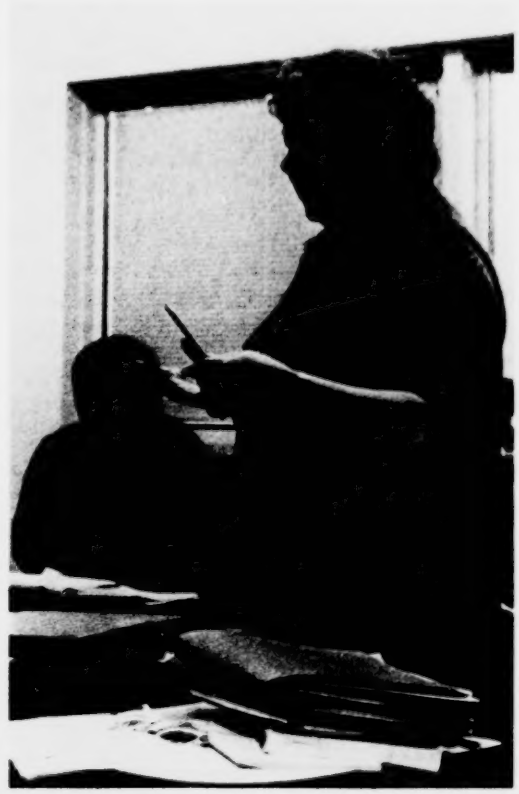
It seems to be easier for women to do this than men. Women have a non-threatening clerical area to move into . . . But there are many pitfalls for women as well. We see some real tragedies because women have low self-esteem and because of this they end up in really bad situations.

Traditionally, whenever one culture moves in on another, women act as the bridge between the two cultures. They adapt more easily and pick up new ideas more readily. Unfortunately, the group that doesn't pick up ideas picks up disco, booze, the night life, records, tapes and TV. They become victimized by association.

From your political experience on the council, what would you pass on to other political women?

Women need to keep in mind — if they are sure what they are doing is right — the feeling of isolation they get when they take a strong stand . . . one must realize how unimportant that is going to seem once something is accomplished.

You have to sense how far you can go without losing your support. I have seen a lot of women go out on a limb on an issue and go too far and lose their credibility and their effectiveness in whatever group they are with because of it. You really have to walk a tightrope.



What is your goal in teaching?

I probably deal with self-esteem, values and motivation most in my teaching.

I think by letting people know that they can affect their own environment, they can have some influence. To me, the most frustrating and discouraging thing a person can face is to feel powerless and unable to affect your own environment. That is at the root of a lot of social problems. In my teaching, I try to help students acquire the techniques and knowledge that will enable them to exercise that power. o

'Feminism is the right to develop one's God-given talents. In fact, I think it is morally wrong to neglect to use one's talents or to keep others from using theirs.'

— Dorothy Haaland, attorney, women's rights activist
Anchorage

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Photo Courtesy of Esther Wunnicke

Esther Wunnicke is currently Alaska Commissioner of Natural Resources. She is former director of the federal Alaska Outer Continental Shelf Office in Anchorage, an attorney, wife and mother of two.

Dear Amy:

Right now you are in college gaining a broad knowledge and ready to focus on those things from which you will make your career. To me there are four C's essential to a successful career — centering, choice, challenge and change.

CENTERING is what you are doing right now so that you can test the future by those things which are right for you; those things which do not run counter to your moral and ethical standards; and those things that are unique to your talents and strengths.

CHOICE will always be yours, whether among job opportunities, companions or between being a full-time wife and mother or having a full-time career. You know how strongly I feel that this is NOT an "either/or" choice and that it is possible to do both.

Lord Byron wrote, "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart; 'tis woman's whole existence . . ." Unlike Lord Byron and many others, I do not agree that when a woman chooses a career she must renounce marriage and children. Nor do I believe that when a woman chooses marriage and children she must renounce a career. A woman's role should not be subservient to that of her husband, nor should a mother's role be so all-encompassing that the children's growth and freedom may be stifled.

But it is essential in making this choice that you choose a good partner, one who is agreeable to other than stereotyped roles and who is willing to assume shared burdens — someone like your father!

CHALLENGE is next. Be ready to accept new challenges and do not be afraid. Often we may wish to know beforehand the course of our choices, but that is not possible in most cases. No matter what examples we have had in the lives of others, we cannot fully know what we are in for. We have to step bravely into the unknown. Meeting challenges takes a great deal of courage, but every free act, every victory over fear and inhibition, leaves an increment of courage, making it easier to accept the next challenge.

And finally, CHANGE will probably be the only constant in your life. You should be willing to accept change, but I believe very strongly that you, as a woman, should be less willing to change yourself than to participate with other women in changing the institutions and procedures of our society. I think you, with your many talents, can help in designing new systems and modifying old ones so that you can work to your full capacity.

As you know, one of my favorite women was the late Margaret Mead. More than 50 years ago she wrote a poem about herself as a young girl skipping (I know you like to skip). In commenting on the poem later she said, "I walked with a light step and the poem included my feeling that if I could skip as I went along, I would be able to work in a world that had not been constructed for a woman to work in." She did that, and she did skip as she went along.

Don't forget to skip, dear Amy, as you meet the choices, the changes and the challenges before you. You will enoble us all.

With love,

— Mom

'To be black and survive with more than a pick and shovel took courage and imagination.'

— Jewel Jones, municipal Director of Social Services
Anchorage

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Photo by Heidi Lee

'Always keep in mind that you are original. Be proud of your sex and of whatever racial identity you happen to be linked with. Never allow either to affect your dreams or what you want to do with your life.'

— Mahala Ashley Dickerson, attorney
Anchorage

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Photo by Margaret Bauman, © 1982 Doyon, Ltd.

Georgianna Lincoln:

'stand beside anyone'

Know that you are Indian. Know that you are Native and that is enough. Apologize to no one. Be proud of who you are. Learn to love yourself.

Doyon Corporation board member Georgianna Lincoln was once considered a radical because she spoke out as a woman. Her introduction to Native politics came with 1960s activism on behalf of aboriginal land claims — a movement that led, finally, to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

Today, Lincoln is program director for the Tanana Chiefs — a non-profit human services agency serving some 43 villages in the Doyon region. She is responsible for services ranging from housing assistance and village government to education and vocational training programs. She is immediate past president of Rampart Village Corp. and currently on the audit committee of the United Bank board.

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Can you tell me about your involvement related to the Native Claims Settlement Act?

I was active in helping through the Fairbanks Native Association to formulate meetings. We started in 1960 with lots of meetings. I was an officer then, but we all participated and contributed and helped to direct some language for the people that went to Washington D.C.

Most people who went "big league" were men. If I could go back to that time, believe me, I would be one of those people going to D.C. People have an image that the ones who really made changes were the ones in D.C. Not true. We had a lot of participation from the local levels right on up to national work. It was a working together, a unity, that caused the language to be the way it was.

What was exciting about it for you?

I don't think we really knew what the full impact would be of the claims. We didn't have the money or the resources to scope things out. The most important thing we looked at was land, and that has not changed — the importance of retaining our land. We stipulated that there be no disruption of that land without our permission. Even today, there are people where I was in the '60s who do not realize what the impact is going to be in say, 1991.

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'You must be lucky to have a good husband who is able to understand and help you. Lucky! How random, how wishful, how passive to be just lucky!'

— Unknown source, quoted by Susan Clark, lobbyist
Juneau

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Can you describe the impact of land claims on the role of women and some of the issues younger Native women will face as a result of land claims?

With the village and regional corporations or boards, you see women on those boards. Not as many as I would like to see, but you do see women active and up front.

It is not because we are being allowed to serve; we are on those boards because we are knowledgable, because we have important background to bring, to assist and strengthen the corporations. Shareholders are the ones who elect us. Shareholders are becoming more knowledgeable about the whole process of, 'I want you to sit on that board for me. I want you to speak for me.' You are judged as to whether or not you listen well. You are watched. And notice, more women are getting elected.

That says something, that women are better listeners, more of an advocate than oftentimes men are.

I have had to battle to get to where I am today. It was never a smooth road for me, I have had to claw to get here. My message has always been, I am no less of a person than a man or anyone else. I am equal and I can stand beside anyone and be productive.

I don't come from a female point of view per se, I want to be involved in areas that are not just women. I want to be in the middle of where there are men involved because that is who I want to change. The women already know. Things for us are changing dramatically and the women recognize this. Some men in some areas are still hesitant.

Having been involved in land claims and now on Doyon's Board of Directors, what do you predict will be the impact of 1991, when the stock in the corporations goes public?

It will be chaos. There was a man who spoke at the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) convention on a panel who said something that struck home. He noted that we are already around the bend; 1991 is not around the bend; we are there, it is tommorrow.

I feel that in 1991, we will see people who will sell out their stock to the highest bidder. We will see dissolution of primarily the village corporations into non-Native hands. Beyond 1991 five years, in 1996, people will be saying, 'I am so sorry I sold my stock. Is there any way I can get it back?'

I think that in 1991 the regional corporations are going to be pretty well set. They are not going to be feeling out different ventures, they will know what they are interested in: the natural resources, the oil and gas, the hotels, the fisheries. They will settle in on a primary business venture with some diversification. The speculation will be over.

How can you teach your people to hold onto their stock and their land?

If we want to maintain those shares held by Native people we must, it is our mandate, get out and do things that in 1991 will give them something tangible. I want to be able to say to a shareholder, 'If you want to sell you will lose this and this and this' — tangible things. Maybe scholarships or losing a pension fund, a block of land, something.

You want to materialize the concept?

Yes. It is not easy to see that little dividend at the end; the dividend is nice, but when someone is offering $100,000, you have to have something to show that is going to be there year after year for them, for their children and their grandchildren.

'I do get discouraged sometimes. I feel like I am a minority within a minority within a minority. Why do I have to use strong-arm tactics to get something accomplished? Why do I have to phrase my demands any different than a man? Why do I have to play games with male counterparts before I can get down to business? Why is that expected? Why all these little tactics? Why do I even have to say that?'

What do you tell the young people?

Education is the most important thing; it is a priority. I don't mean only formal education, I mean the education of elders, going in and listening to their village elders. Going into village meetings, corporation meetings and asking questions. You can get a good education by knowing how to listen and getting involved. Get into your village council, your city council, health boards, the list is ad infinitum.

You know, when I was president of the village council, I used strict parliamentary procedures. When someone raised their hand to be recognized they had to know motions, seconds, and how to amend something — because it is necessary to know these procedures in this corporate world.

We can go the village way, but we better know the corporate way, too. We need to be able to walk into any corporate room or meeting in this state and know how to overrule something, how to stop it, how to amend something, how to put it back on the table again.

That is really learning how to get and manage power.

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'We must confront jealousy as a force which divides women.'

— Jo Ryman Scott, civic and cultural activist
Fairbanks

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'Being female has nothing to do with why you are in the position you are in. It has to do with how productive you are, how creative, how much you can achieve, that is what it is about. Women have to block out the fact that they are women, they can't use the fact. As a person, you are equal.'

That's right. And you learn when someone is buffaloing you. You learn how to stop it. Parliamentary responsibility and fiduciary duties are two important things to learn.

Fiduciary duties means that you are legally responsible for your actions. You are the ones that go to jail for the decisions made. If you, knowingly, make a decision that is contrary to any bylaws or what your shareholders want, and you do so with knowledge, you are legally responsible. It doesn't matter if you are the only one that votes a certain way; if that is how you feel sincerely, vote your conscience.

Out of all your activities, are there any experiences or areas where you have been most empowered to impact change?

My work with women. Just last night a young girl said, 'Georgianna, you are the only one who will yell loud enough for change, that will see that we have change.'

I am not a women's libber, but I am for equality. I will hold to some old traditions, where it is not proper for a woman to do such and such. Yes, there are a few that I hold to, if it is something that my elders have said I cannot do. I have an old chief's necklace that I would love to wear, but the elders said I can't wear it. I hold to that; I respect that. I feel every bit as much a chief as a man, yet I won't put that necklace on.

My impact and my greatest love are different. I still hold the health field dear to my heart. There you can see results immediately. Maybe that is why I like it; when you patch someone up mentally or physically, you can see that change taking place with your eyes. So many other things you can't see.

I know that I have come a long way since 1962, when my active involvement began. I have a child, now 16, and I say, 'My God, this child is different,' so I know I am different, too.

You know, I was told back in the early days that a leader could not get along with me because I was too radical, too argumentive. I think back on those times and I'm sure I was, but I wouldn't change them because that was the only way I felt I could penetrate the system. I had to beat the table, call for points of order. Now I don't have to do those things, but it has taken me a long time to get to this point. And I don't want any other woman to have to go through what I did to get to this point; we are talking about 21 years.

What nurtured you through those years?

Strength and inner strength. The inner strength that was given to me by my mother. Like Desa said at AFN: pull back your shoulders, suck in your gut and you are as heavy as the heavies up there on the podium.

I have always acknowledged my mother because she said you are no less than anyone else, you are equal. In 4th grade, we moved from Rampart Village where we had a one-room schoolhouse and we had shoepacks and I thought they were the cat's meow. I came to Fairbanks in midterm and here were these kids in little dainty dresses and shoes; I did not want to live in Fairbanks, it was foreign to me.

Mom said, 'We'll get you some shoes.' Maybe not new shoes, maybe hand-me-down dresses and shoes, but we were equals. And she always pounded that into my head, that I was no less than anyone else.

I do get discouraged sometimes. I feel like I am a minority within a minority within a minority. Why do I have to use strong-arm tactics to get something accomplished? Why do I have to phrase my demands any different than a man? Why do I have to play games with male counterparts before I can get down to business? Why is that expected? Why all these little tactics, why do I even have to say that?

I get frustrated, then I sit back and think I am predestined. This path is cut clear for me and I am following it, willingly. Knowing that, I can take boulders and move them aside because in front of that boulder is green pastures; maybe more trouble, but nothing is insurmountable.

Mom always tells me, 'Your grandmother is looking down on you, George.' I think sometimes, I say, 'Oh granc'na, does this have to be this way?'

Do you have a sense of why you are outspoken, why you have taken the risks you have and why you are willing to defy the status quo?

I feel this strength because I like me. I like who I am. I accept my role and I am confident, because, again, of this path that I am on. What will be will be, that is my motto. If today does not run out well, so be it, there is tomorrow and it will be better.

A person has to say, 'I like who I am,' before others can really like them and respect them. I try and be a person that my Native people can look at and say, 'She is not mischievous but knows the path and will carry the load.' I would like to think that I have upheld what my people would view as the qualities of a Native person they would like out front.

Why do you think women have so much trouble accepting themselves?

Society has made us feel like we must play games before we can achieve →

'For me, one of the most rewarding things about the feminist movement is the fact that I no longer consider women a threat. I consider every strange woman a possible friend.'

— Beryl Johnson, activist
Anchorage

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the end. Once women realize that it is not necessary; rather, you get in there and do it as a peer, not because you are female.

Being female has nothing to do with why you are in the position you are in. It has to do with how productive you are, how creative, how much you can achieve, that is what it is about. Women have to block out the fact that they are women; they can't use the fact. As a person, you are equal.

If you go into any situation and you say, 'I am an equal,' take it from there and don't let the male buffalo you, because in this time, the male will still try and buffalo you. We, as women, try to foster that idea also. Why do we have to have an Alaska Statewide Native Women's Organization? Why don't we try and get a woman on the AFN? Why not run a woman as chair of AFN? Why not elect a woman president of AFN?

We have many, many qualified women. There will come a time when we get together and nominate. We have a lot of delegates on the floor; there will come a time when we get a woman elected not because she is a woman, but because she can do the job.

It is sort of like the churches. Who holds up the church? If the women boycotted the church, the men would discover real fast who fills the pews.

Yes, but I am not saying I am putting down women who don't want to be up front. The point to me is to be productive, and that is the key for your well-being — to feel like you are doing something that you want to do, not because someone else feels like you should do it. If you have a fight internally about what you want, then you are doing what someone else wants. If you do what you want, the internal fight ceases.

Who has influenced you the most in your life? People you credit with making you who you are today?

My mother is the top one and the greatest influence because of the strength she portrays, who she is and the respect she commands.

'A person has to say, 'I like who I am,' before others can really like them and respect them. I try and be a person that my Native people can look at and say, 'She is not mischievous but knows the path and will carry the load.'

Her name is Kathryn Evans Harwood; she was born and raised in Rampart. She always told us who we were. You hear so many Native kids say, 'I don't know who I am — I am one-half Eskimo and one-half Indian,' or whatever combination. You are Native. You don't have to divide yourself and say this half is Eskimo and the other Indian. You are Native and it requires no more than that. You don't have to adjust that for anyone.

There were seven of us children and we knew who we were from the day we were born; never any question about it. I came home from school once and said, 'Mom, I don't want to be Indian.' Mom would not accept that. She said, 'George, be proud of who you are and here is why, and don't let those kids buffalo you. You go back and hold your head up and tell them why you are proud you are Native.'

The part that influenced me, then, would have to be Native people. Not just Doyon Region, but Natives period. Native people who come up and hug you and shake your hand and smile, or any gesture that says we are proud of you. It is such an honor, especially when the elders say that. I feel so greatly honored by that.

And surprisingly, there are two men that influenced me, and only two men worthy enough to mention their names. One was Sam Kito and the other was Tim Wallis. When I sit with those two guys, I am equal and I damn well better produce as well as the next person.

Anything else you want to pass on?

To you the young people, I would say, 'Learn how to drink, learn how to maintain. If you don't want to drink then don't. If you are going to drink, then learn how to; don't let drinking control you.'

We have too many leaders — really leaders — that have been wasted because of a drinking problem. You can say, 'I don't want to drink.' You don't have to drink with your peers. It is a leader who can control their own destiny.

Productivity is the key, whether you are a hunter or fisherman. Don't sit and idle the time away. You can be productive by going to listen to the old people in the village, splitting wood for the old people. To say that there is nothing to do is unacceptable, because there is so much ahead for us to survive.

You and your children are going to be more and more of a minority. Look at statistics of demographics. We have gone from 100 percent to 60 to 20 to 15 and I think there are around 1,000 (non-Native people) per month coming into Anchorage. That means the percentage of Native people in the state dwindles and dwindles; we must be more powerful and unified.

We are depending on our young to have the inner strength and productivity to see future generations through some very trying times in terms of survival. That is a lot to put on their shoulders, but I know they can do it.

I feel really honored to have people choose me, because there are many unsung heroines who don't get the recognition. A leader is not necessarily the visible one; always there are those being trained in the background that are waiting to be called upon. When you start being involved in something, no matter what it is, it does become easier, the more experience you get. I honor those that are not named as one of the publication; they are the ones that caused me to be where I am today. ❍

'No family. All family gone, but they are all smiling at me.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

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Dorothy Haaland:

'reach the churches'

Photo by Jim Lavrakas

Dorothy Awes was born in 1918 in Minnesota and reared in Iowa. She attended law school, motivated by a natural feminism that refused to allow her to be pigeonholed as a teacher or nurse — the "expected" vocations of educated women of the time.

She came to Alaska in 1945 and stayed to pioneer change in Alaska life and institutions. As a U.S. Commissioner in Cordova, she often played counselor to the small town. As a territorial legislator she addressed the problems of a developing territory struggling toward statehood. As a member of the Alaska Constitutional Convention, she fought for a modern constitution including equal rights for women. As a lawyer-activist, she lobbied for passage of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. As a former devoted churchwoman, she continues to challenge the Catholic Church to embrace the message she perceives in the gospels.

Dorothy Awes Haaland demands accountability and integrity from systems she considers fundamental — be they the U.S. Constitution or the Bible. She has spent a lifetime making them work. • • •

I think feminism is the right to develop one's God-given talents. In fact, I think it is morally wrong to neglect to use one's talents or to keep others from using theirs. I don't think feminism is strictly for women. Equality implies two things because you have to be equal to something. Stereotypes show both men and women bound to lifestyles that are not particularly realistic or suited to them. When you are free from one of these bonds, the others will follow suit.

I think in Alaska women have more opportunities than in other places. I think this is true historically of the West in general. Unfortunately, society has so conditioned women that even though they are shown they have this freedom and are able to use it, once the society becomes stable and develops to be like other places, women are not so important; they get pushed aside and have to start all over again.

I think we have got to reach the women in the churches.

I know a lot of feminists think the church is hierarchical and there is nothing you can do with it. But I would say you either have to change it or you have to destroy it. It is so powerful. But I would be the last to say you should destroy it. I think there is a lot of good in it and I think people need it.

My father was an agnostic but my mother was a strong Irish-Catholic and that wore off on me. For a while I was bothered by the things the Catholic Church said about women. I tried to change things and had no support, so I finally left the church. I really think the church in our society has been harmful to women. I can't consider their attitude "Christian."

They are supposed to be followers of Christ, and read the Bible. Christ always spoke respectfully about women and treated them as equals. Even in Genesis it says, "God created man," in the generic sense, as equals. How can you say women are inferior, an inferior image of God? It does not make sense.

Talk about leaving the church.

It was a major thing for me. It was a decision that took more than 30 years to make. First, I left parts of it aside — what I was dissatisfied with — and I kept going back to fight. I weighed my decision to leave the church with not leaving; I read a lot and prayed a lot. Then, once I decided to leave, people said, 'Oh you should stay within the church and work for change that way.' But lay women in the Catholic Church have no more opportunity to do something than the man in the moon.

If you feel this way, why is it important to reach women in the churches?

To get the message to them that they are NOT supposed to be submissive, like the church likes to push down on them. Their husbands are not always the boss.

Churches are one of the most powerful and influential systems in our society. I don't think the feminist movement will succeed until we reach the churches and force them to change. ○

'I never did like housework, I should have been a boy.'

— Hazel Heath, businesswoman, former mayor
Homer

JOURNAL

My Dear Young Friend:

I'm very pleased to be asked to contribute to your work on Alaskan women. To give advice seems a little tricky, since I know that five years ago I would have said something quite different from what I'll say today, and that five years from now it will be some new development. But I can tell you about two big ideas I'm working with a lot right now; I'm not entirely sure how they fit together, but maybe this letter will help us both figure that out.

The first idea is the importance of coming to value the contributions women have traditionally made to society in their role as homemakers and mothers. Since that's my job right now, it is very important to me to understand that, consumer society or no, life off the fast track can have real value.

The other day I overheard a conversation between two women, one of whom claimed to have been to every dime store and grocery in town looking for black gumdrops. It seems that she was making several dozen candy spiders for her daughter's Halloween party, and red or green gumdrops wouldn't do. My first reaction was, "This is why women are not running IBM and Time/Life, because they've used their energy running around looking for black gumdrops, for godsake." And that's true.

But then I flashed on a Halloween tradition we had when I was a kid; I remembered sitting with my mother and brother constructing — can it be? — black cats made out of prunes. We probably only did this once, this tradition, and maybe everybody else has forgotten it, but somehow it stuck for me; it made for me a part of the picture of who I was, and who we were together. I remember the laughter and the creating and I remember the holiday specialness and I remember feeling attached. I think that memory probably anchored me through some much harder and uglier family times later.

We theorize that killers and rapists and users get that way at least partly because of something lacking in their childhood. Why, then, is it more valued in our society to be the lawyer who gets the guy off than to be the parent who prevents that distorted development in the first place?

I'm certainly not saying women shouldn't be one-half the shakers and movers in our economic and political systems. We should. But we should not lose certain wisdoms which traditionally have been our strength. Pioneer Alaska women are said always to have planted both a vegetable garden and a flower garden — one to feed the body and one to feed the soul. I'm saying that our souls need feeding now as much as ever, and that for the sake of our children, for the sake of our mothers, and most of all, for our own sake, we must reconnect with that part of ourselves that understands the value and beauty of building a daily life. Women have traditionally had these responsibilities and developed these skills; we must be proud of these values and skills, and share them with men.

The other big idea I'm dealing with right now is that of limits. It is a truism that women are reared to be endlessly nurturing, the selfless source for others. I suppose because we've been trained to view ourselves as inferior, we never feel we've given enough. Just now Carol called, wanting to talk over a job offer she's had. This woman has three children and a greater than average assortment of ills and dilemmas right now; it's been a rough fall. She feels emotionally depleted and realizes that taking a job of any sort will add stress. But they need the money. The job involves working with severely handicapped older people, in effect either offering them motivation to live or helping them to die. Should she take the job?

"I've got this empty basket here," she said, "and I'm supposed to go out and fill up everybody who needs it."

I said, "You wouldn't apply for a job as a nuclear physicist because you're not equipped to do it — and you wouldn't feel guilty about that. Well, you're not equipped right now to minister to the dying — why feel guilty about it?"

Because being a woman means you should be able to read just one more story, make one more trip into town, save one more soul, make a million and raise the Waltons. The folks who make Geritol and Aviance believe it; our husbands and children believe it; and, God help us, we believe it. It's outlandish, and it shows a total lack of self-awareness and self-respect. We don't trust ourselves to be what we really are, so we break our necks trying to out-run, out-mother, and out-earn.

Well, I think what we really are is actually much more rich and promising than that charade. What we really are is moving, changing and growing; we are realizing our own strength. We are challenging the accepted, shallow ideas of what should be valued in our world. We are learning that we do not have to conform to some external standard; that it is enough, and more than enough, to be genuine, honest and humane. We are able to forgive others, to see when they need time to refill; now we must learn to be that respectful and that gentle with ourselves. I think we are strong enough not to have to pretend to be strong, and loving enough not to have to pretend to be loving.

I think maybe we are smart enough and grown up enough to acknowledge traditional women's values without feeling tyrannized by them. At least that's what I'm working on right now. Thanks for asking.

— Kay Reese

Kay Reese is a feminist, homemaker, mother of two and former teacher. She lives in Anchorage.

'I'm not satisfied with awareness, I want action.'

— Emma Widmark, Grand Camp president, Alaska Native Sisterhood
Juneau

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Photo courtesy of Jean Dementi

'We theorize that killers and rapists and users get that way at least partly because of something lacking in their childhood. Why, then, is it more valued in our society to be the lawyer who gets the guy off than to be the parent who prevents that distorted development in the first place?'

— Kay Reese, teacher, homemaker
Anchorage

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In a previous guise, Frances Ann Ulmer was a lawyer, planner, manager and bureaucrat. As director of the state Division of Policy Development and Planning (DPDP), she was one of the most powerful figures in state government — known to many as "the conscience of the Hammond administration."

Today, she considers herself a professional futurist — a mother who primarily cares for two children and works in society to prepare for them a prosperous future.

Fran Ulmer was born in Madison, Wis. in 1947. She earned a political science degree and law degree from the University of Wisconsin. She clerked for a federal judge, worked as a legal counsel to the Alaska Legislature, acted as legislative assistant to Gov. Jay Hammond, and finally assumed leadership at DPDP. There she was one of the major architects of Hammond administration policy.

She serves on the Juneau comprehensive planning commitee and the planning commitee for her church. She operates her own government affairs consulting firm. At home she is wife to Juneau attorney William Counsel and mother to Frances Ann, 4, and Louis Charles, 2.

Fran Ulmer: *'I am a futurist'*

Are you now a full-time parent?

I have many activities which are related to commissions I sit on, or volunteer work. But the main thing I do is take care of a 4-year-old daughter and a 2½-year-old son.

A year ago I quit my job to do that. I had decided that it was impossible for me to do absolutely everything. I always thought I could be superwoman and do everything, anytime. I finally got tired, reached age 35 and said that as long as I had made the commitment to have children, I wanted to spend more time with them before they went into school. So that is my job, primarily.

Before making your decision to be a full-time parent, how did you balance your various roles?

The first year of Amy's life, I had a full-time woman who did everything for us; the laundry, the cooking and the child care. For that year, it was easy. When my son came along and this woman left Juneau, the strain came.

I was director of the Division of Policy Development and Planning (DPDP) and that was the kind of job that would take all you could put into it and more. I eventually reached the point of not being able to get the right balance of child care and the traveling demands of my job, and I decided it was not worth it.

Generally people can do that if they have someone they trust with the kids and a husband who is willing to pick up the balance. My husband is a very liberated person, but he was opening up his own private practice at the same time my son arrived and Marsha left town. It reached the point that I knew it was time to take a break at home.

I eased myself out of the directorship over a six-month period and avoided the trauma of a busy-to-nothing transition. I had been thinking about the change for a long time. I would advise anyone thinking of this to not do it radically. Don't do it on the spur of the moment and all of a sudden find yourself at home. Plan for it, think through how to spend your time, and think of some things to keep you involved intellectually.

You will find that in a work environment you are constantly surrounded by other adults with a lot to talk about. All of a sudden you find yourself at home with little kids and the contrast is too extreme. I think without preparation it can really raise havoc in one's mariage and one's self-image.

What are some things that you have learned about yourself as a mother?

In my opinion, most of the jobs I have had in my life, I was not adequately prepared for. That applies to mothering. Nothing in my life had prepared me to be a good mother. I never babysat as a child; I had no younger siblings; I had never been interested in babies.

All of a sudden we decided to have kids and madly began reading books. Most of the books were related to how to take care of yourself during pregnancy; there was very little on parenting until the child was around age 4. The first couple of years you are really on your own in this society.

What I have mainly learned about myself is where my limits are in terms of patience and the ability to communicate on my children's level. I was always able to dictate the level at which I communicated; all of a sudden I had to re-think →

'Too often women think if it doesn't look easy at first, it must be too complicated for them. It's not too complicated; otherwise men wouldn't be able to do it.'

— Barbara Dale, commissioner and businesswoman
Juneau

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how to express myself. I had dealt with abstractions all my life and all of a sudden I had to deal with very tangible things.

I also thought about how do you get a child to grow up with the values you want the child to have inside their person when he/she walks out the door at 18; the things that will sustain them in times of trouble. In the process of thinking about what you want to give to your child, you think about the things that are really important to you.

You asked who influenced me and I think it is relevant to the discussion on parenting. My parents are on top of the list.

My mother was always a professional woman and I had no doubts that I would have a profession. It never occurred to me to stay home and have babies. I always had the attitude that I would go to college, not get married early on and have a professional life in addition to a family life. She was superwoman and I had the impression that was normal.

For father, well, I was the youngest of two daughters. I was his son, so he took me fishing, hunting and hiking. I grew up in that environment: Dad taught me that what I wanted to do was fine and I could do it; it didn't matter what sex I was.

Where did you grow up?

In Wisconsin. You know thinking about it, my parents really influenced my attitude of male/female relations greatly and also my perception of myself. Their whole attitude was you can do anything you want to; anything was free game if you put your energy into it. Being in a small town, it was easy to succeed; I was positively oriented and had a good self-image. How do you tell someone looking for advice to get good parents?

The other person who influenced me greatly at the early point of defining who you are was my grandfather. He was a well-known conservationist in the Midwest who led the fight for an unpopular but wise decision about putting land away for public use. The Horicon Wildlife Refuge, outside of where I grew up, is partly state and partly federally owned. It gets about 300,000 geese every spring and fall passing through. That was Grandpa's project. From him I got the notion that you can fight and make something happen even when there are insurmountable barriers.

I went off to college and got a political science degree. One of my professors suggested I go work for Sen. McGovern's delegate reform committee in Washington D.C. for the Democratic Party. I discovered very quickly for the first time that it was not all equal between men and women. I found countless examples of overqualified women in low-paying jobs who really were making most of the important decisions. They were making things happen but were not getting any of the pay or recognition. It was that experience that convinced me to immediately go to law school.

I returned to the University of Wisconsin and got my law degree under the theory that in that world — at least the political environment — if I wanted to do what I wanted to do, I was going to have to be overly qualified. I needed to have a degree that meant something so that when I walked through the door they didn't ask me how many words I typed. In my graduating class of 200, there were only three women.

Did your self-image go through various stages in law school, being one of few women?

Well, not really. It was a shock to me when I went to D.C. and saw the male/female situation. In the beginning, the women's movement had not reached the point of being a household word. It was not like there was this awareness coming in. It was not traumatic; I had a simple solution: 'Get a degree and play by their rules. I can do it, just because there are not many women lawyers; who cares, I know I can do it.'

Alaska was more of a shock in the political sense. I had expected Alaska to be very open to women and I came here and found a very closed old boys' club in the Alaska Legislature.

Do you still advocate that a woman should try and change a system by getting the credentials, getting inside the system and going at it that way?

That is my preference. I am not sure that is the right answer. I am the product of a generation when it seemed that was the way to go. I am a firm believer that systems can be changed, but they change slowly. For any individual's lifetime, I still advise getting into the system and playing by the rules. Try and change things as you play by the rules, but don't attack the system and think you will change the system substantially in your lifetime.

'Most of the jobs I have had in my life, I was not adequately prepared for. That applies to mothering. Nothing in my life had prepared me to be a good mother.'

I think you have to pick your issues. There are unquestionably some issues that you can very effectively get at from the outside just by making things uncomfortable. But there is usually a very high political price one pays for this.

What are some experiences where you have impacted change?

Well, it was indirect in nature. But the time I worked for Gov. Hammond, I was to do analytical work and advise him on policy issues. Hammond would give the Division of Policy Development and Planning a question and ask what are the range of possible answers and possible consequences. I would like to think that the impact I and we had was to improve the quality of decisions.

There are so many issues that come before the governor at any one time, and there is a limited amount of time and energy; he needs people to help give him advice. Most of my impact in terms →

'Thinking helps your circulation.'

— Clare Swan, chief of Kenaitze Indian tribe
Kenai

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of DPDP was to be more process and analytically oriented instead of just politically oriented. Most of my job was to be devil's advocate to people who would come in with a problem and say this is the politically accepted solution.

A major part of my job was to say, 'Wait a minute, where does that take us and what are some other options?' It developed an image of me as being a negative person, sort of a thorn in the side, the conscience of the administration. That was exactly what Jay Hammond hired me to do.

'I am a firm believer that systems can be changed, but they change slowly. For any individual's lifetime, I still advise getting into the system and playing by the rules. Try and change things as you play by the rules, but don't attack the system and think you will change the system substantially in your lifetime.'

Did you ever get the feeling that things were politically set up in advance and that your research was for naught?

Once in a while. Jay Hammond is an incredibly open-minded person. He keeps an open mind right down to the point of making a decision. That is what a lot of people don't like about him. But it did happen.

A good example of that was when the legislature passed HB60, the supplemental appropriations bill. Everyone knew it was bad. We were spending more money from the previous fiscal year's budget. The politics were absolutely overwhelming because there were a lot of trade-offs amongst legislators that would work if it went through.

It was a classic example of a stacked deck. And yet, there were people like me saying these are lousy projects, they have not been planned for; it isn't going to be a one-time deal; it will set something in motion; don't do it. No amount of reason at that point would have made a difference.

Another thing is that DPDP never had a management position. I took the job not trained as a manager and learned it after I arrived on the scene.

I realized that women make good managers. We are naturals. We understand what motivates people, how to motivate them when things are not going so well. We have a sensitivity that produces a good work environment. I think the other point related to this is that women are less likely to have their egos tied into managing. They take more creative risks, they have less personal political agendas, and therefore approach their job with a greater degree of commitment to the work at hand.

Is there any particular moral or ideological-political construct you carry with you to the job?

My parents were Republican, so I started out that way. College was liberal, so I was tempered. I guess I would call myself an environmentally conscious fiscal conservative. I am much less interested in political parties and more interested in process.

What influences the way you think about government?

I think it was in high school and law school, where I was forced to think analytically, to write clearly at an early age. Today what I have to offer is how to dissect problems, how to reduce them to their core, how to find alternative solutions and how to summarize them. It makes me less doctrinaire and more analytical. I focus on issues, not parties.

I suppose in some way my beliefs converge. For example, you probably can link my belief that you must pay your way in life — that it is somehow immoral to take without giving — to religion. That is why I volunteer my time. I love Juneau and I believe that I owe it something. I guess I am big on personal responsibility.

Do you have any sense of where Alaska women are headed in terms of equal employment and with the ERA being defeated?

There has been a great deal of progress toward equal employment; the ERA was a last-ditch effort in that arena. With the depression, women will be the hardest hit. There is a fake notion that women are not primary breadwinners in this country.

I think the biggest battleground is not in the legal field, it is on a personal level. It is how a woman relates to a man at home. Look at wife/child abuse; look at the inequities in personal finances. It has to do with how jobs are divided in the home, how children will be raised. It is learning how to say, sometimes, 'I need me more than I need a man.'

I respect people who take courageous stands, people like Lidia Selkregg, Jay Hammond and John Rader. I want to be someone with firm stands on things even when politically, it may not be the most advantageous thing to be. There are a lot of greedy people in Alaska now and that is why it is especially important to be active in the '80s. The '80s will determine much of what happens in the future.

I am a futurist. I believe in planning for future generations. That is another thing I believe women understand well. Women care what kind of lives their children and grandchildren will live. Women are far less militaristic, less concerned with money and more concerned with the environment.

There is an intensity of bonding between mother and child that can be brought to bear on the planning process. Let us plan and save for our future, for our children's future.

'St. Jude is the patron saint of otherwise impossible causes. When I first came I thought, 'That is a great name for a church with a woman priest in North Pole.'

— Rev. Jean Dementi, Episcopal priest
North Pole

JOURNAL

Connie Munro:

'I need to know how they feel'

Transitions are Connie Munro's specialty. She comes from a family accustomed to them, she's survived a few herself, and today she helps other women manage the strains of changing their way of life.

Constance Lozon Munro is coordinator of the Adult Education Center at Juneau's Southeast Regional Resource Center, charged with helping adults study for high school equivalency tests. She also helps people — particularly women in transition — to gain the coping skills necessary in modern society: jobs, housing, finances, legal problems, decision-making.

At 47, she is well qualified to help. She earned her own equivalency diploma at 35; served with VISTA; gained an associate's degree in social services; and is working on higher degrees in adult and community education.

Her father was a factory executive who became an activist with Caesar Chavez' farmworker's movement. She comes from a line of traditional Italian women who nonetheless slipped non-traditional schemes into their lives: an aunt who secretly attended law school, for instance, or a grandmother who was the first woman in town to learn to drive. She was a wife and mother in the '50s; awakened to the civil rights, women's and peace movements in the '60s; energized to travel in Russia, Finland and Scotland to study women in transition in the '70s; spurred to write a book on the topic in the '80s; and heavily involved in community activism in Juneau today.

* * *

"I was married and pregnant at 16. I started to study for my GED back then but I didn't have the money . . . Or, I didn't want to risk my money; my husband was the total support. I stayed home and took care of the kids. It never dawned on me in all those really hard, poor times to go out and work. Instead, my husband would take two jobs or stay up all night at a painting job so we could survive.

"I thought if I stay in my ivory tower and socialized only with people who think like I do, I am not doing much for the women's movement. I must go out into other areas and be with people who feel the opposite of myself and share with them. I need to know how they feel, why they think what they do, and build understanding.

"Men need to be educated and released from their prisons; all people should be free. We ended (a project on women in transition) with a consensus definition of freedom: Freedom is in your daily activities, you do not have to oppress another person or group to do what you have planned to accomplish in one day." ❍

'Political candidates, legislators and people who make decisions are finally realizing that women are a significant voting block. Opportunities to get on the political team should be taken.'

— Suzanne Iudicello, state public information officer
Juneau

JOURNAL

Mary Schaeffer: *'I learned I had to be strong'*

Mary Schaeffer is a Native woman with foundations in both Native and white culture.

She was born in 1940 in Kotzebue and reared in traditional ways, but she knows the world of politics as well. Along with her husband, NANA Corporation head John Schaeffer, she has been a part of Native activism in Alaska politics since the beginnings of the Alaska Native Land Claims effort. She's stayed involved by fighting for Native hire on the trans-Alaska pipeline project, and, more recently, on efforts to keep Eskimo culture alive through traditional elders' conferences and the northwest Alaska-based Spirit Committee.

Sophisticated in style and spiritual in outlook, she is today employed as a legislative information officer in Kotzebue.

What is the Spirit Committee?

Well, we are trying to bring back spiritual values. It is because we want to bring back these values that we formed the Spirit Committee a couple years ago. NANA, the Native corporation, joined with the local school district and the non-profit arm, Maniluq, to begin looking at why we had such an alcohol problem, why our young were committing suicide, why there were so many family break-ups.

We knew something was missing and discussed that what is really missing is that a lot of younger people have lost their spirit, their own identity and spiritual values that I had when I grew up. That is what we are seeking, a way to bridge the gap.

You refer to the traditional way you were raised. What does this mean?

I grew up with my aunt and uncle. When I was born my real mother was struggling to make a living at the hospital and she couldn't find a reliable babysitter for me, so she asked her older sister to care for me. Her sister and husband took me in. At the time they were living in Noatak, so I went up there and grew up with them as Mom and Dad.

Every spring we would go down towards Kotzebue, across from Sheshalik. We went down so Mom could help with cutting Beluga and fish and seals to try and get enough food for us during the winter time. We would follow the rest of the villagers; when the ice would first start moving is when the people from Noatak would start going downriver. We would camp there from the end of June to August and then would move to Kotzebue, where we would gather the basics and then go back upriver at the end of August for winter.

As far back as I can remember, Mom showed me how to make snares and how to use the dog team to go get ice. After school, I would go hook up my dogs and I would put out my snares for either ptarmigan or rabbit, and check them.

Finally, when I was 11, we moved to Kotzebue. It got to be hard for us living in Noatak in the winter time because we had to do so much work.

Did Native land claim politics affect you at all?

Some of the early organizing efforts were held right in my house. Just before we moved to Nome, Willie Hensley asked John to help organize a Native organization. He told us he was going to try and get some settlement from the government for all the Natives in Alaska. He told us that he had to leave for a meeting and that it was all on John's shoulders. John, in turn, told me to round up some people while he drafted up this organizational thing that we were going to get started on, something like the Northwest Native Association.

We only had one child at the time so we didn't have enough chairs, but I began to round up people. They were always going to the post office and we were right on Front Street. So I had my window open and would talk to people as they went by. I would tell them what we were trying to do and we got 15 to come to the first meeting. And that is how the Northwest Native Association first got started.

Then we moved to Nome and John was involved with it on and off. I would do detail work, the minor stuff they didn't have time for, like making coffee, rounding up people, getting paper, just little things but that is how I got political.

What were some of your struggles during such adventuresome times?

I think a lot of it at the beginning was trying to mesh the Western culture with our traditional culture. If you feel good about yourself and know what you want to do and where you are going, nothing will come in between. If you are open and free inside, you can be that way on the outside with other people. ❍

'When you are on the outside of the system, all things are possible. When you get in the inside, some things are not as possible as you thought they were.'

— Sharon Jean, borough assembly member
Soldotna

JOURNAL

Natalie Gottstein: 'more of an awareness'

Natalie Gottstein took up the cause of mental health services partly out of personal experience and partly in recognition of Alaska's gnawing mental health problems and demands. Today she is executive director of the Alaska Mental Health Association, which she describes as "the citizen's watchdog" over mental health services.

* * *

How do you define mental health?

Put simplistically, mental health is the ability to cope appropriately with the stresses and situations in which one finds oneself most of the time. When one finds oneself unable to cope appropriately (happily, comfortably) most of the time, it is a good time to look for help.

Can you talk about women and mental health in Alaska?

When you look at statistics, you will note that more women than men seek counseling. This is because women have more of an awareness of the field and less shame wrapped up in facing problems and asking for help.

Women in this country are rapidly emerging. Our mothers and grandmothers didn't have these same kinds of problems we do today. Our roles are changing. We have very inadequate concepts about what women should be, what role they should play. There have been false portraits of women perpetuated over the centuries.

Women in relationships need not feel obligated to solve the problems of the relationship alone with a counselor or therapist. When one person begins to change and the other remains the same, the relationship is thrust into imbalance. Today, people can work things out together and women don't have to take it all on by themselves. People are going to have to recognize that both women and men have responsibilities toward the success or failure of personal relationships.

How did you end up working in the field?

I was getting a divorce and it necessitated my going to work. I was not afraid to seek help for myself in that difficult period. It raised my level of understanding and awareness. I have always been interested in people. I guess I just fell into the job.

It seems like mental health in Alaska is a challenging field. What are some of the main tasks associated with your work?

Well, Alaska is number one in terms of aberrational behavior, from abuse to rape to violence to alcoholism. And Alaska is number 50 in terms of state expenditures on such problems.

One of the tasks of the association is to work to make the state meet its trust responsibility to Alaskans with mental health needs. When Alaska was in the process of achieving statehood in 1956, the U.S. Congress granted the territory 1 million acres of land to be managed as a public trust to provide funds for Alaska's mental health programs. The lands were sold, traded or leased, and the proceeds were placed in the general fund. To date, the mental health programs and patients have not received these funds. So, that is a major task.

We have quite a challenge ahead of us as a state. Alaska has several cultures, all with differing traditions about the role of women. We have a society that is expanding and changing fast; this has caused a lot of dysfunction and we need to find the answers to these new roles other than in the bottle or with a pill. We have a unique opportunity to cross-culturally address changing roles of women. We must come up with better ways to meet the new needs of our state's various cultures. Unless we meet this challenge, Alaskans and their families will be facing the same problems for generations to come. Women have, for time immemorial, accepted the responsibility for problems. Many are no longer willing to; it is a three-way process between men, women and society.

'If whites knew more about the other side, and we all learned how to better deal with the other's culture and problems, we would be far better off. We are all handicapped in one way or another, I learned that years ago.'

— Janet Helen Gamble, community activist, Shiloh Baptist Church
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Photo courtesy of Thelma Buchholdt

Thelma Buchholdt is a former teacher and legislator. She was born in the Philippines and educated in the U.S. She is the mother of four children.

I was first elected to the Alaska State Legislature in 1974, re elected in 1976, 1978 and 1980. Since very little has been written about Alaskan women who have contributed to our state's economic, social and political development, during the 1981 session I set aside funds for this Women's Political Leadership Project.

I came from a politically active family. My mother was active in local and regional politics in the Philippines. My career was influenced by her example.

Today, I am a small businesswoman and deal with international trade. Together with my husband Jon, I am involved in many educational, social and economic community planning and organizational projects in rural Alaska.

Serving in the state House of Representatives during the past eight years has been an honor and privilege; I am the first and only person of Filipino heritage holding this elected position to date in the U.S. mainland. (I have my counterparts in Hawaii, but the Filipino legislators there are elected from districts populated by our people.)

As a minority woman in the legislature, I have had to deal with sexism and racism at every turn. I had to seize responsibility and do what I could. I fought to serve on the powerful Finance Committee and on other major committees. Because of my strong self-image, I have been able to prevail.

I have tried to be very realistic about public service. One must be committed to the public good to serve in the legislature. There are few other reasons for pursuing such a path. I do, however, believe that young women today have many opportunities and can make just about anything out of their lives.

We certainly need more women in the legislature and politics and I have fought for this. If you are truly committed to public service I encourage you to get involved at a young age. Choose a mentor or two, learn from them, join local organizations, develop your skills and your ability to serve will emerge. Good luck.

Sincerely,

— Thelma Buckholdt

'From the beginning, we doesn't have any alcohol around so much, when I was three. Nobody have alcoholic in the town. Never have accidents. It's like all at once something happened.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

JOURNAL

Stapleton/RurALCAP photo

'I have this terrible thing called commitment. My commitment to my people is like a disease, it is so strong.'

— Clare Swan, Kenaitze Indian chief
Kenai

JOURNAL

Lillie McGarvey:

'I became very self-reliant'

Forced separation from loved ones, lifestyle and traditional culture has been a fact of Aleut life since the first contact with Russian settlers.

For Lillie Hope McGarvey, that experience began with an education at Eklutna and Seward, rather than her home at Unalaska. It continued, with even more pain, when World War II military authorities evacuated the Aleuts at Unalaska for internment at Bennett Island, near Juneau.

She spent the war in Alabama and Seattle, then returned to Unalaska with her two daughters when her husband was stationed in Germany. Hard times forced her back to Seattle, but when a postmaster's job opened for her in Unalaska, she returned home for good. Since then, she has been businesswoman, village health aide ("before they had a name or compensation for it!"), magistrate, city clerk and mayor. Today she sits on the board of directors of Aleut Corporation, health care boards, the Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization and related community activities.

Through it all, she has preserved a striking sense of humor — and a glint in her eye that says adversity will not conquer Lillie McGarvey.

* * *

What happened to you during the war?

I had married a soldier in Unalaska. So, rather than be evacuated with the rest, I was shipped on Navy transport to my husband's home in Alabama, in the middle of July. It was terrible. I was so isolated. I had always been in a village where I knew everybody.

I had to leave a good job as a waitress. It was a good life. Having to break away from Unalaska like that was especially upsetting, since I was five months pregnant. My baby was born in Tennessee instead of Alaska.

I spent a year in Alabama and then went to Seattle to be with my sister, whose husband was stationed there. My sister took care of my baby while I worked as a welder in the shipyard. I was 19 at the time. I worked swing shift so I could be with my baby during the day.

My grandmother never came back from the war. We had visited her in St. Paul sometimes, but she hardly spoke English and I barely spoke Aleut. I remember telling her we were at war, when I heard it on the radio, but I didn't know if she understood me or not until my uncle came home and talked to her.

'My main advice is don't get married until you feel confident that your husband is willing to be responsive to your position. Don't marry someone who feels like a hero when he takes the garbage out.'

— Dorothy Haaland, lawyer, women's activist
Anchorage

JOURNAL

'In the past if you said there was no reason to go on, someone would tell you umpteen ways you could help others and that you need to go on because others depended on you.'

What did you do when you returned to Unalaska after the war?

I got divorced and became the sole support for my two daughters. I was determined to give them anything I would have if I hadn't left. I got a job on the base as a secretary-bookkeeper. Then when the bases closed, I ran a restaurant. Things became so depressed and people had no money to spend. I was lucky if I took in $10 a day. So in order to make a living I decided I had to leave. I decided to move to Seattle with my two children.

I got a wire saying if I wanted the job as postmaster I should take the next boat. That was a tough decision. I had worked up to a comfortable lifestyle and my kids were settled. But I also decided my kids were beginning to talk like me, think like me, and that they needed some male influence. So I went home where my dad and my brother were.

There was no medic in the community, since the Navy base had closed down. People started bringing cuts and bruises to my mother, since she was a midwife. She had her hands full with my dad, because he had a stroke, so I started taking the calls and fixing people up.

I was postmaster for a while, but it was so boring that I started my own business. I ran a hotel boarding house with a restaurant . . . One night, a woman came to me with several deep cuts. I took her to the restaurant where there was a lot of room and started cleaning her wounds. Just when I finished cleaning up the couch and finished up, the first customer came in.

It was often like that; I was always busy. Sometimes I would work 24 hours around the clock.

What did you learn in business?

When I ran my own business I realized you have to do things that you don't believe you can do. When I was running the hotel sometimes I would have to get up in the middle of the night and carry oil from one place to another. Or I would have to repair things because there was no one else around. I became very self-reliant. I did things like take our boat and motor and go explore bays and coves around the island. After the business, I became magistrate and then city clerk and mayor.

What motivated you to run for mayor?

I had a lot of technical skills. I ran for mayor in order to make a few changes. We developed an entirely new city ordinance. They had been using the one from when the city first became incorporated. It needed work. That was a big task. Again, I was not compensated for my work.

What was it like to be a woman mayor?

There were not many Native mayors and being a woman was certainly a challenge. There were not many in town. But I did feel that I was taken seriously and we got the technical jobs, like roads and water systems, taken care of.

I've often wondered what it was like before the Russians came to the Aleutians. What were the children's names? What were their songs? Now they are all things of the past.

What effect did Russian colonization have on Aleut women?

Before the Russian contact, each person had a role. Able-bodied men did the hunting. The sea was their entire resource. The Aleuts perfected a watercraft known today as the kayak. While the men were gone for weeks or months at a time, the women were left to run the village along with the old men and the children. Older people were the teachers. Women made clothing, gathered berries and green edible plants; they wove baskets and mats as well.

When the Russians came, their role changed drastically. Women became servants or slaves to Russian husbands. Some were taken as mates, some were married. They became stevedores.

As the men were gone, the women had to help the Russians load their boats. During this process, many were taken to other villages to follow their Russian mates. Everything changed. They were not allowed to practice their traditions, their religion. They were made to wear Russian clothes.

Russian Orthodox became the practiced religion. A priest who worked with the Aleuts later wrote a book about them and stated, 'It was easy to convert them because their religion was similar to ours; they believe in a Being who made the wind blow, the sun shine, the moon shine (implying that similarities existed between Russian Orthodoxy and Aleut rituals and religion).' Similar or not, the Russians forbade them to use any of the Native ceremonies or dances.

'Before the Russian contact, each person had a role. Able-bodied men did the hunting. The sea was their entire resource. While the men were gone for weeks or months at a time, the women were left to run the village along with the old men and the children. Older people were the teachers.'

'A language is so precious to a culture, far more precious than all the material riches in the world.'

— Martha Aiken, bilingual translator
Barrow

JOURNAL

'When I ran my own business I realized you have to do things you don't believe you can do. I became very self-reliant. I did things like take our boat and motor and go explore bays and coves around the island. After the business, I became magistrate, then city clerk and mayor.'

Could you tell me a bit about your own family history?

My great-grandma was brought to the Pribilofs before they were inhabited. The Russians took men from the islands to the Pribilofs to hunt fur seals for them. In the next four years, women were brought to be mates for them; this was about 1790, and my great-grandmother was one of those women. Her daughter (my grandmother), and my own mother were all born in the Pribilofs. My father was a Navy veteran from England who established a radio station in St. Paul and then transferred it to Dutch Harbor. He married my mother in St. Paul and they moved together to Dutch Harbor/Unalaska. My mother was a midwife; she delivered most of the children in the village.

I have been away from home a lot. When I was 11, the local BIA doctor suggested I go to Eklutna for school because by the time I reached high school it would be full. I was going into the 8th grade. So I enrolled in the 8th grade and moved to the school, 25 miles from Anchorage and thousands of miles from home.

What was it like being taken away so young?

Terrible. I was fairly young and I stayed there for two years. At that time you had to stay at the school until you finished. You were not allowed to go home during the summers or on holidays.

I was there when the BIA decided to test everyone and put them in a grade according to their scores. I scored high, so they wanted to put me in 12th grade from the ninth. I did not want to, but they wouldn't change the rules so I wrote my dad and asked him if I could quit. He knew the superintendent at the Jesse Lee Home in Seward and made arrangements for me and the preacher's daughter to board there while we went to high school in Seward.

That was a good experience for me. I met a lot of people and had exposure to many different values. Each spring, I had to take the mail boat home and we made 25 stops along the way. In every village, everyone would come meet the boat, so I met a lot of people. I saw a lot. I feel privileged because not many Aleuts get to see other people and their values; transportion and isolation are such a problem. I was lucky.

Why do you think suicide is the choice so many young people are making instead of getting involved?

Well, I think suicide leads to more suicide. In the past no one committed suicide. Now you hear about them all the time. Young people are saying, 'It is no use going on; I might as well end it.'

In the past if you said there was no reason to go on, someone would tell you umpteen ways you could help others and that you need to go on because others depended on you. That image was greater than it is today in traditional routine. The loss of culture and community image has left people with less self-esteem; they feel out of it, rather than part of it. The more they grow on this, the worse it gets. They turn to alcohol and drugs, which intensify the feeling that your life is not worth living, that you have nothing more to do in the world.

In the past, people learned to roll with the punches. That is something people now do not learn to do.

What are the primary decisions facing Aleut women today?

There is marriage or living with a person. Whether or not to have children. They have that choice now; and they didn't in the past. And they must ask themselves how far they want to be involved in their village entities.

'The loss of culture and community image has left people with less self-esteem; they feel out of it, rather than part of it. The more they grow on this, the worse it gets. They turn to alcohol and drugs, which intensify the feeling that your life is not worth living, that you have nothing more to do in the world.'

How are women who are involved in their work, their village corporations, viewed?

It is traditional that most men are chauvinistic, but they realize they can't do it all themselves. I think more and more women are being encouraged to go ahead with whatever they want to do.

What advice do you want to pass on to younger Aleut women?

I have told some they should get involved in things that are important to their villages. I have encouraged them to get involved in the corporations. I won't be around forever. Someone needs to be able to take the place of those running things now. We need young people. I keep saying, in Alaska, any young person can be whatever they want to be; there is so much opportunity for people. All you have to do is work hard. ❍

'I think women are better when they assert themselves, they feel like they can do more and not just be bound up by the old scrub board and cooking. You can love your husband and respect him and all, but you don't have to be a slave or a doormat for him.'

— Dorothy Clifton, community activist
Valdez

JOURNAL

K. Nordale: *a founding mother*

Katharine Nordale was one of six women among the 55 Alaskans who authored the Alaska Constitution. She arrived in Alaska in 1925, a schoolteacher bound for Fairbanks. She took part in Alaska politics out of resentment at the power of Seattle interests over Alaskans' lives and fortunes. And she remembers the constitutional convention as a time of unity among Alaskans:

I ran at large in the territory and was elected. I served on the executive committee and the committee for style and drafting. That was particularly appropriate as I was an English teacher.

I never saw people work harder. We worked in a disinterested manner, what I mean is not an egocentric or selfish way. People were interested in the whole state, in the people, and we all knew each other.

All in all we worked hard. We had limited time and limited money. Many a night we stayed up with the style and drafting committee until 3 a.m. working so that we could have our work ready for the next day's floor session.

People were interested in the state. They were sick and tired of the federal government and they wanted to be able to have something to say about their own destiny, of their state, of their lives. That was the goal. It was not to achieve personal aggrandizement. ○

Sharon Jean: *'dive in, find out'*

Sharon Jean is an apparent anomaly on the largely conservative Kenai Peninsula: she was elected to the borough assembly in October of 1981 as a female, a liberal and a feminist.

A relative newcomer to the peninsula, she nonetheless has a long record of civic involvement. She is a member of the board of directors, and past president, of the Women's Resource and Crisis Center. She is on the boards of directors of the Central Peninsula Hospital Board, the Cook Inlet Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and the Children's Center, a non-profit childcare center.

• • •

I think that the way women will have a greater impact is if we get them elected to office. There are a lot of myths about who can be a politician. Sure, it takes certain capabilities, but they can be learned; it doesn't take a god to be a politician. If women see other women in the positions, it shows we can do it. If you can read and think and write and pay attention; if you care about your community, then women need not be mystified by the political process. Dive in and find out about it.

What has changed in your perceptions of the political process now that you are in office?

When one is an advocate for women's rights or organizing a women's center, they are working outside of the system, sort of gnawing at the inside to get their needs met.

But the tables turn when all of a sudden a liberal is in office, has to compromise and make tough decisions. It is interesting; when you are on the outside, you think anything is possible. When you get inside, some of the things are clearly not possible and you must deal with this. There is a different level of knowledge one needs to operate within the system.

The good news is anyone can learn that knowledge by participating. ○

Photo courtesy of Ron Garnett

'Life is far too short to do things you don't want to do. I have hired someone to do the housework.'

— Rose Aversid, member, Alaska State Humanities Forum
Cordova

JOURNAL

Magnhild Lee: *'I came here all new'*

Magnhild H. Lee is the matriarch of Petersburg's Lee family — three generations strong and firmly established in the town often called Alaska's "Little Norway."

Her story is like that of many immigrant women, especially Scandinavians, in Alaska. Born in Norway in 1892, she came to America with her family in 1906. Her family stopped in Portland, Ore., where her father had a gardening business, and then acquired a farm in Washington.

The search for a better life led her to Alaska in 1910 to work for her sister in a Petersburg restaurant. She finally married Harold Lee of Petersburg and set about doing what women have done for centuries: she helped build a community. The town needed water, electricity, a school, a library, a government. Magnhild was a part of creating the Norwegian backbone of Petersburg.

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Photo by Heidi Lee

You immigrated to America from Norway when you were 14 years old. Can you describe the experience?

It was terrible. Just terrible. It just wrecks some part of your life. Oh, but it couldn't be helped. I can see that everyone else, they have a different kind of girlhood.

I came here all new, had to learn. At first I went to the minister in Portland to be confirmed, Lutheran, of course. Once you were confirmed then you went into the grown-up world. You end your hair ribbon stage then and lift up your hair now on your head and become a lady when you are confirmed.

My father already had a garden business, lining up yards. I went with him to explain what they (customers) were telling. And we went to night school and got along fine. I started in the public schools in the first grade, which was very humiliating for a 14-year-old girl; to sit with first-graders at a desk and not know the language.

But think about this, for instance. Hundreds of thousands of women come with their husbands to this country, and their life, they become just exactly like a helping hand to get along. You only feel like you are half a person. I think they have something to make up. When we think about how this country is different from every other country in the world. The way those women had followed their men from one part of the world to the other.

The conditions (of immigrant women's lives) kept a lot of women back, out of politics. They had to come through something in this vast country, a lot of struggle; they all had individual lives which were difficult. To think, really, of what they could have accomplished; but there are women doing very important things. It is important to keep house, too.

You were on the school board and the city council in Petersburg, quite active. What motivated you?

It was both my family and the way I grew up. My parents, in Norway, were very interested in public affairs. My father was supposed to be a farmer but he really taught agriculture to the community. We had lots of young people come stay with us; we discussed all kinds of things and I got used to that. It is important to be completely involved, because we are human beings. We are citizens. We are part of it. Many a time I would find my folks sitting up writing their contributions to the paper.

My mom was very interested in the women's vote. And the first time the women's right to vote in Norway came, it went through different stages and I was just a little girl. A man could vote whether or not his taxes were paid up in time, but a woman couldn't vote if the taxes weren't paid on the farm.

So the first time women voted, my mother didn't because our taxes were a little bit behind. I stood by my mother watching the rest drive by, into the community. 'You should be there, too,' I said to my mother. 'It doesn't make a difference,' she said, meaning that at least those women were able to vote. It wasn't so very long before she could vote.

So I don't have anything so very interesting to tell you; it just came to me naturally, this activity, and there are a lot of other intelligent women who were active in Petersburg.

Can you describe your experience on the city council in Petersburg?

I was on the city council a bit after the late '30s. I can tell you the city council today is a lot better than in my day. In my time, they kept secrets from people. They didn't feel the people were entitled to hear a real report of anything in town. No. What they could keep away from them was so much the better. It was lonely and frustrating not being able to share about the city council.

I was the first woman on the city council in 1930. I have always been treated like a person, so that part was just fine. I was nervous about the secrecy business, though. Very often, if I was the one who stood for things that caused controversy; Harold stood by me. ○

'I love people just like my body, every people, I don't know I really want to help them. I pray to Lord to help me be willing, to give me wisdom and understanding about these people.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

JOURNAL

Nancy Bird:

'take up opportunities'

Nancy Bird, editor of the Cordova Times, has covered plenty of ground in her 29 years.

She was born in Washington D.C. and reared in the Middle East and India. She attended Carleton College in Minnesota, and took time out to reacquaint herself with her American roots by joining the 1972 McGovern campaign for president. She came to Alaska as a recreation counselor in Cordova, and stayed well beyond a two-year tenure in that job. She has — in no particular order — run for the city council, lived in a wilderness cabin, spent an entire summer kayaking in Prince William Sound, managed a swimming pool, and worked as a substitute teacher.

You name it; chances are Nancy Bird has either tried it or given it serious thought. Adventure and taking risks are a working part of Nancy Bird's philosophy.

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Your position as editor of the newspaper is considered one of power. How do you handle the responsibility?

It is a position of power. I seem to vary from day to day on how powerful I think it is. Some days I am aware of power; others not so much. I periodically think that as a woman I could use the power more to increase people's perspectives and awareness on women's issues. I don't feel like I have done that very much in the last 14 months.

You said you have been political for years. Could you explain?

I grew up overseas, in the Middle East and India. My father was in the foreign service. I was influenced by the leaders of these countries. People like Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi.

You came back here and went to college. What made you decide to return to the U.S.?

Well, I came here for two years and left again. But what made me want to come back was my freshman year of college. McGovern ran for president. I became real involved in the campaign.

I used it as a vehicle to help re-acculturate myself. I found that it was a wonderful way to get off the ivory tower college campus. It helped me get out and meet some real Americans and see what American was supposed to be all about and not try and find out from books. By the end of the campaign, I felt pretty adjusted to the U.S. There is something to be said for living in a place where you can participate and have a right to vote. As an expatriate you can't do anything like that.

You ran for city council here and lost by 20 votes, right? Why did you run?

I guess what motivates me is not seeing anyone else who I consider capable of the job. I ran to fill the void. Same with the McGovern work; it was a re-entry excuse and I filled a void.

Something that largely affected my life was being evacuated from the Middle East twice, during the 1956 and 1967 wars. In 1956 it was from Jerusalem and in 1967 it was from Cairo. In Cairo I was in the 8th grade. We got evacuated on three days' notice. It interrupted my whole life, so it really upset me.

It upset me even more to realize that my father, an Arabist, could not get anything he wrote about the war (he stayed in Cairo) published. Publishers said it had an Arab bias to it. Well, he is an Arabist; he speaks the language fluently. It angers me because the publishers said no; everything that was written about the war was very pro-Israeli. We were sent to India because all the Arab nations broke relations with the U.S. and there was no place to send an Arabist.

With that big disruption in my life I began to do a lot of political reading about the Middle East. It makes you very aware of your surroundings because you realize it could happen any time. You are forced to learn that the world does not live in the same microcosm that the U.S. does.

I also developed a philosophy out of all that which says, 'Take up all opportunities as they arise. They may never pass again.' ○

'I always know that when change feels like depression, there may be something gratifying in the end.'

— Pat Ray, utility branch manager, Shiloh Baptist Church
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Dear Molly:

It was wonderful to hear from you. Looks like you're going through one of those times, like so many of us have, of sitting down and thinking, "How can I possibly balance all the pushes and pulls that I feel? I really want to get out and be a part of the community, I'm beginning a terrific professional life and I have a family too. Can I do it all?"

I suspect that your thoughts are being echoed by tens of thousands of young women across the country and certainly, too, here in Alaska. Your questioning comes at an interesting time for women. Through our own efforts we have carved a toehold into the "system" and in doing so have brought about expectations that we will continue to participate. We have more freedoms and options than at any other time and now we are being expected, and rightly so, to exercise those options. We have a responsibility now, and as with most responsibilities, there is no turning back.

Looking at current accomplishments is giving us a new perspective of history. I think that now we are acknowledging parts of cultural history, philosophical history and most importantly, social history — the history of people and families, communities and social institutions. This expansion of the historical point of view is allowing for recognition of a newcomer to the historical field — women's history. At school we learned of the struggle to settle the frontier, a struggle that matched man against his environment — and that with courage and rugged individualism he won the West. Similarly we know that the Western view of the history of white people in Alaska is the history of the discovery of gold, sourdoughs wresting from the earth its precious minerals and again conquering the environment. Pretty stirring stuff.

But you know, I think the truth of the matter is that families conquered the West. Without all family members' work, the settling of the frontier would have been impossible. When history tells us about the enormous human costs for this epic adventure, we should remember that women and children bore more than their share of those costs in privation, disease and death. And I think that's certainly true in the history of Alaska — even in the Gold Rush era, more often than not miners came with their families. Not only did women do their daily tasks (which in those days was darned hard work!) and keep their families together, but they worked alongside the men. It seems to me as daughters of these women who performed such a huge burden of work we really ought to be awed by their strength.

Without question, women were the civilizers. On the western frontier, they were expected to bring civilization and culture, to soften the harshness of frontier male society as well as convert the heathen. And women lived up to those expectations; in town after town, women moved in and saw to the building of churches and schools, and probably brought law and order with them as well. I think all of this has been too often overlooked by historians.

Yet there is more to it than the statement that it was done. Women learned to band together for a purpose. They formed civic improvement clubs, joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union — all as a way of changing politics and the social environment within which they had to raise their families. They learned that not only is there strength in togetherness, but that that strength also strengthens the individual. Women got the vote and went on to run for office and become active in life beyond their community.

I mention all of these things because I know in the case of my mother and her time the balancing act with work, family and community was part of her life. She was a very strong woman, a teacher, a public speaker, a motivator and a catalyst for change. Although she died when I was quite young, stories were told and retold about her strength of character, her ability to face odds, her willingness to not always take the easy course. Through those stories I learned about those ways from her.

We live in a complex society — one that makes it easy for us to turn our backs and move away to things that bring us only pleasure, things that keep us away from harsher realities and complexities of change. But there is that need to have "hands-on" experience — to face challenges, sometimes to face the pain and loneliness that comes from difficult decisions. On balance, though, there is the great joy that comes from being able to see good things happen because we were there, because we made a contribution.

I think there can be no question whether you should move ahead and get involved, Molly. With your competence, your capability, your ability to grow, to change, to think, to be involved, there is only one answer. For me, the decision was really very easy. It was a natural curiosity, a confidence in self, the knowledge that I had certain strengths and that those strengths could be utilized to impact and bring about change.

But a part of involvement is always hard work, a balancing of equities and difficult decisions. There are no simple answers — things don't come and doors don't open simply because you wish them to. There is always a price you pay, but part of what you get is growth, respect for self, and, if you are lucky, community respect and support. Those things are certainly worth the involvement.

I would like to pass along two pieces of advice. First, look for mentors — men and women who can advise you, who can and will give you strength, who care about you, and who will help nurture you when your decisions are difficult. Secondly, don't walk on the bones of your contemporaries. We are not here alone, and it is important not to take for yourself that which is taken at the expense of another. Be a positive force. Keep in touch and good luck!!

Much love and respect,

— Arliss

Arliss Sturgulewski is a state senator from Anchorage.

'Mom said, 'We'll get you some shoes.' Maybe not new shoes, maybe hand-me-down dresses and shoes, but we were equals. And she always pounded that into my head, that I was no less than anyone else.'

— Georgianna Lincoln, Doyon Corp. board member
Fairbanks

JOURNAL

Photo courtesy of Mahala Ashley Dickerson

'Striving for sexual equality does not mean that we are seeking to destroy the family unit. We seek only to end patriarchal domination and the subordination of women. We seek to have equal opportunities.'

— Rosita Worl, anthropologist
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Sharman Haley:

change is personal

Sharman Haley lost her job over political principle — and she's been fighting ever since to get it back. For three years, the Harvard-educated Juneau resident has waged a bitter legal fight over the right of state employees to engage in political activity after work. She's won all the preliminary rounds, and the case has been argued before the Alaska Supreme Court.

In March of 1979, Sharman Haley — at the time a three-year employee of the Legislative Affairs Agency Research Division — attended a demonstration on the capitol steps regarding the role of multi-national corporations in Alaska. She was asked by TV reporters to explain the demonstration, and the interview was broadcast on the local news.

Her boss interpreted her action as a violation of state statutes prohibiting "partisan activity," and she was dismissed. Convinced that her action was not partisan — "partisan politics are Democratic and Republican electoral politics," she says — Sharman Haley went to court to try and establish the right of public employees to support causes they believe in.

...

What have you learned about making change in the American system?

I do not see the legislative or political or judicial processes as being important to change. By their very nature, the legal system and the political process are not set up to provide real creative leadership.

'Don't worry. Be happy.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

JOURNAL

The legislature is a good example. People are elected from their districts, so you are not going to have any real radical ideas or people with radical ideas getting elected. People have to receive 51 percent of the vote to get elected, so that is a watering-down effect on the political spectrum.

In Alaska, you have a pretty broad spectrum of people who get elected, but when they actually get into the decision-making process of the legislature, there is another watering-down process to get anything passed. You have to make a lot of compromises and you have to have a broad basis of support before the idea can even get translated into legislation.

By the time you get something through the legislature, you have already got a substantial basis of support in the community. Really, it is just reacting to changes in ideas that already have happened at the grassroots level. It just takes time for it to work its way through the political process.

The court system is a little more reactionary in that it is built on a body of law which is based on precedent. Precedents evolve slowly because one must rationalize all your precedents, what has gone before. You cannot make radical changes there, and the law is designed that way.

There are very good reasons for all of this — and I think it is important — but it is not a source of change in our society.

What is?

I think the place where changes happen are at the grassroots level, in people's homes, in their offices, on the streets, in their social clubs. The kinds of changes the court or legislature makes are important but they don't really affect people's lives to the extent that personal change does.

For example, the legislature can spend weeks debating oil and gas regulation or how much to allocate to the Department of Military Affairs, or whether to build the Susitna dam or not. On a day-to-day level, most people's lives don't change drastically from those opinions produced from January, when the legislature goes into session, to May or June, when it emerges.

Compare this with a movement like feminism and the picture is even clearer. In the 10 years that I have been watching the feminist movement, there have been radical changes in a lot of people's lives.

'I think the place where changes happen are at the grassroots level, in people's homes, in their offices, on the streets, in their social clubs. The kinds of changes the court or legislature makes are important but they don't really affect people's lives to the extent that personal change does.'

It has changed family structures and relations, it has changed women's feelings about themselves. Those are radical, dramatic changes; they affect not only women but the lives of men, and will affect the lives of generations of children to follow.

None of these changes happened because of legislation or courtroom victories; they happened through grassroots efforts like the shelter for battered women. Once you start getting real changes on the grassroots level, they will filter into the political and legal processes. You will start getting more social government support, but only after the changes have begun to snowball.

You speak of social change; what is the most important issue related to women that must be changed?

I think the most fundamental issue is money. Our whole society is structured around money. And money is power in our society; without money you don't have power and I am not talking about for political influence, I am talking about the basic rudimentary power of having some measure of control and security in your own life.

Money has a lot to do with self-esteem. I think if clerical workers got paid twice as much as they do, they would have a lot more self-esteem and confidence in their skills. With money comes options. I am not talking about getting rich, I am talking about the vast majority of women having an equal share of the dollar power.

With your views on the legal system and change, do you ever feel like your past three years were wasted?

Well, I do not feel like I am making a specific point of law or anything; the law has always been there. I am not breaking new ground; there is no reason why it should drag on for so long.

I feel bitter about the waste of public money; they have spent well over a half-million dollars and that does not count the judges' time. I can think of many other ways that money would have been put to better use, starting with the women's resource centers and shelters for battered women.

Did you ever feel a conflict about that, like maybe you should just quit?

No. I could never quit because the principles that employees have a right to speak out and be politically active is tied to my personal philosophy that social change does not happen in the legislature, it happens at the grassroots and it takes being outspoken and active to help make those changes. It is also tied into my ideas of employee rights. Employees should be evaluated on their job performance. What you say and what you do off work hours, unless it is proven that it affects your job performance, should be off-limits to the employer. It is so commonplace in a town like Juneau for people to feel like they cannot open their mouths or express their own convictions because they would lose their jobs.

'Even in Alaska, the most macho of men has to confront women all the time. The reality is that men up here have to deal with women in high positions, or at least equal positions.'

— Donna Morris, printer, union leader
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Would your case change this?

I would like to think so, but I have some evidence to the contrary. It seems to have had a clamping-down effect in some departments; people end up being more cautious than ever.

What sort of personal effects has a three-year court case had on you?

The initial firing was real traumatic for me. Partly because when I know I am right and can't figure out why others don't see it the same way, I get real frustrated.

I had a hard time simply coping with the stress and conflict and all the decisions I had to make on the spot over the long haul. It has been hard being unemployed and knowing it was not because I was incompetent. It was because people were scared to hire me.

'I have also received some amazing phone calls. Perfect strangers have called to lend their support. It makes a big difference to me just knowing that there are some other people out there that appreciate the significance of this and that may directly benefit from the case.'

Has there been support, public support, for you?

Yes. After I got fired there was another demonstration organized to protest my firing and there have been several fundraising events to help pay my legal fees.

I have also received some amazing phone calls. Perfect strangers have called to lend their support. It makes a big difference to me just knowing that there are some other people out there that appreciate the significance of this and that may directly benefit from the case.

I can say without reservation that on a personal level, it is not worth it. However, there is no point in the whole three years that I feel like I could have made a decision to bag it. I think the part that strikes me on an angry tone, besides the whole thing, is the wearing down, the slow grind of breaking somebody.

I may not be in a mental institution but I have struggled and learned a tremendous amount in the realm of physical, mental and emotional health. This has definitely affected the resources that I have to take into political and organizational work.

What politicized you?

I have to say that the turning point was my freshman year of college. As a teenager, I was something of a dissident, not in school, but in terms of social convention. I always had a natural sympathy for the underdog. When I got to college it was 1969 and student radicalism was in full force. I majored at Radcliff in social studies and read a lot of social theory: Marx, Weber, Freud and Durkheim. I wasn't hot on feminism until I left college.

What has informed your feminism?

A lot of it came through my association with a group called Radical Women. Radical Women is a socialist/feminist organization which has been around for about 15 years. It is nationwide and grew out of the frustrations of women in both the New Left and the Old Left regarding sexism.

They got together and founded Radical Women, which was sort of a happy marriage between the Old Left and the New Left. They made feminism and women's issues, issues of lesbians and gays and people of color, first-priority issues and that is where they broke with the Old and New Left. They found women's issues to be first priority, radical issues, revolutionary issues. A lot of the New and Old Left considered women's issues secondary — 'We'll take care of women's oppression after the revolution; we can't worry about it now so please go make coffee so I can write my speech.'

I have gained real respect for women's leadership that grows out of women's unique experience. Women very often are also workers and also poor. A lot of women suffer additionally being a lesbian or a racial minority. Women tend to have a broader understanding of oppression because they are oppressed on so many different levels; they don't divide it up. Women deal with human oppressions in a much more integrated manner than the radical politics which came out of the socialist movement. The women's Left movement is a lot more multi-issue and concerned with all varieties of oppression and people's struggles.

How does your lifestyle, living cooperatively, mesh with your politics?

I do not think I consciously integrate my theory with my lifestyle. Rather, political theory has helped me understand the implications of my lifestyle.

The conflicts I have naturally felt help me understand more on a political level. I think developing a particular theory, having a political analysis, has helped to focus my organizing energies. Even if you don't subscribe to a leftist analysis, having your own understanding, politically, of the world is real important in working for social change. Without an understanding of how power works, you can not devise a strategy for effecting change. The clearer your understanding, the easier it is to make practical everyday decisions. We all have to make choices and having a system for prioritization is essential. ◑

'I think suicide leads to more suicide. In the past no one committed suicide. Now you hear young people say there is no reason to live. In the past if you said there was no reason to go on, you would have been given umpteen reasons why others depended on you.'

— Lillie McGarvey, president of Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization
Anchorage and Unalaska

JOURNAL

Barrow's Sadie Neakok walked a challenging path as Alaska's first Native woman magistrate in 1960. On one side were the demands of white law in a state just emerging from federal jurisdictions; on the other were the needs of an Eskimo community living at the very edge of American civilization. She worked constantly to reconcile demands that often clashed.

One well-known episode involved village-wide civil disobedience over leftover federal game regulations limiting waterfowl seasons to that time of year when the birds already had flown south.

As Sadie tells it, when one hunter was arrested for violating the absurd law, she quietly organized the rest of the village to protest — by breaking the same law, overwhelming the game warden's administrative capacities, drawing forth the spectre of mass jailings and community emergency, and, most important, pressuring the state to change the regulation. It was, perhaps, judicial activism at an awkward peak — but it brought necessary change for the people of Barrow.

Sadie is the daughter of Charles Brower, a famous Eskimo whaler and U.S. Commissioner at Barrow. She attended high school in San Francisco, but returned to Barrow as a teacher, social worker and, finally, a magistrate.

Photo by Fran Durner

Sadie Neakok: *'I meant business'*

How was it that you became a magistrate — the first Native woman magistrate — and one who never attended law school?

I was a social worker and a teacher. My dad was Charles Brower, the U.S. Commissioner, and he died in 1945. The Navy base opened up and there was a segregation between the base and the Natives; you couldn't cross the line from this community into that camp at certain hours. They were hiring men from here to work there, but at certain hours once the men came home, no one could cross back over. It was barred. I saw how ridiculous that was; people were getting picked up for violating that type of restriction. I was forever before the commissioner defending my people even though I was not a lawyer.

In 1959, when Alaska was becoming a state, there were many changes in the legal system. We had to go on state rules. I had to do a lot of explaining because of all the changes; everything changed and we had to go by rules then — not our own rules, outside rules.

There were state troopers coming in here to enforce the law. Before, we had always taken care of our own community. The first appointee for our district (as magistrate) was Eben Hobson. When he discovered he couldn't make it work, he started coming over to me and trying to talk me into becoming a magistrate.

My first case was a burglary. I didn't know the difference between a felony and a misdemeanor. I was trying to hear the case and solve it the way Dad used to do.

I discovered the magistrate had different ways of solving things; I got accused of holding a kangaroo court! I didn't even know what kangaroo court was; oh, did I ever learn fast.

How was your tribal law different from white law?

It was more severe. I was with the tribal council; any person that was an offender, if repeated, was ousted out of the community and never allowed to come back.

Did you consider this a more effective legal system?

Well, it made our people think and respect their elders. Certain types of living were required. It was hard for our people not to tell the truth. Automatically, when our people come in, they don't hesitate to tell you the truth, no matter how bad it is.

When I first started it was difficult. I needed the help of the community. I needed to let them know that I meant business. When I needed help from the police and I didn't get it, I threw them in jail. Anyone who refused to help me got stuck in jail. I meant business.

What was the best part of your work?

Gaining the respect of my people. ○

'I don't see women as fragile, like the system likes to suggest. I keep going back to the black women who helped me, hoping that I can repay the dignity and courage I received. I want to see more black women realize that they are capable.'

— Jewel Jones, municipal Director of Social Services
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Rosie Porter: 'fight for integrity'

Rosie Porter is editor and publisher of the Tundra Drums, the Bethel-based weekly newspaper that counts all of Western Alaska as its news coverage zone. And she is outspoken about public affairs, personal activism and media responsibility.

Ask her about taking risks and she'll tell you the worst thing to do to young people — especially women — is to say they should be careful: "My God, what if they really were? What if they really had no experience under their belt?"

Rosemary Porter lied about her age — she was 14, but said she was 18 — to get into the newspaper business in New Jersey. Now 43, she has lived in Alaska for 22 years, the past nine in Bethel. Before starting work at the Tundra Drums, she worked as a journalist in Fairbanks and Anchorage — helping pioneer the field for women in Alaska. Today she directs the fortunes of a 6,000-circulation weekly that penetrates the entire region of Western Alaska.

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What particular experiences affecting change with the newspaper stand out to you?

We have to look at all of Western Alaska because this is a regional paper. You have two elements at work here that fit nicely: radio/TV and the newspaper, both regional sorts of media. We are in every village; every village store has newspapers on their counter. The people have an enormous amount of information that affects their daily lives. You have a more cohesive area, more and better opinions, they vote more intelligently because they have better information. The reinforcement of media is very nice.

There is a story I tell, and I have been telling it for years. When I first came here and worked for the radio station, we were doing a heavy-duty double campaign; it was before a big state election with propositions. I had a number of people from Anchorage say to me, 'Oh listen, the people out there are so nice, they always vote yes on propositions.' Election night was a thrill because we were counting ballots from the villages, and we were checking off the propositions and every village was yes-no-yes-no-no . . . they were selectively approving and disapproving those propositions and initiatives because that one year they had a body of information they could deal with; they were armed. The fact that people were making decisions was a real high.

How do you deal with the responsibility of power?

So many people have said that to me and I just don't feel that I have a lot of power. People are fickle, too: one day they know you, and then when you lose power they don't. You have got to know when you have it and when you don't. You have to keep humble, keep your toes right down there nailed to the terra firma. What happens when you don't have it when you really do believe in it?

Do you have any sense for why there are so many women in journalism up here?

I'll tell you, there haven't always been. When I came up here in '58, I tried to get a job with the Daily News-Miner and it was out. They didn't have a women's page; they didn't have women, period. Then I went to work for the radio station and no women had ever written or read news.

It was tough, tough to get into. I remember several other women in Anchorage, Ruth Edmonson — things were bad, the economy was totally depressed — she got a job volunteering. In fact, I know several women who volunteered. Lael Morgan was one of them; she did a job by saying, 'Let me do it. If you like my work in two months pay me. If not, I will go away.' There were a few women who pioneered the way, people like Chris McClain.

It is hard now because women look at some of the women who did break into the game, the old guard. People say, well, they did the women's pages . . . Of course they did, because that was all they could do. They were pioneers.

Anything to pass on to younger women?

Don't be careful. Get out and do something. If it is a little hard, good; do it twice. Get courage, trust what you believe in and trust what is inside of you. People struggle to grow, to add on and to become better than we are. But our cores are the same; trust what that inner voice is telling you. Listen and act, mostly act.

If the rest of the world doesn't respond with love and affection, that is their problem. The bottom line is that you have to live with you; you are your own accountability. You really have to take responsibility for yourself and act out of that space. It is a lot easier than being a wimp or victimized.

You need to fight for integrity. I am saying that out of 43 years old, and at 21 I didn't know it. ○

'I really enjoy getting to a person's soul. It isn't like stealing their soul; from my point of view it is genuine, positive and important to honesty.'

— Joan Bugbee Jackson, artist
Cordova

JOURNAL

Evelyn Bonner: *'a holdout for the humanities'*

Evelyn Bonner was born in the Deep South, initiated politically as one of the first blacks to vote in Wilcox County, Ala., and educated in struggle by joining black voter registration drives and the 1964 Selma-Montgomery Freedom March.

She came to Alaska in 1967 to work at Sitka's Sheldon Jackson College, where she now teaches English classes and serves as director of the library. She plays an active role in church, civic and statewide organizations ranging from the Business and Professional Women's Club of Sitka to Soroptimist International and the Alaska Historical Society.

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What were some experiences you had early in life where you effected change?

It first happened when I was a freshman in college. I went to school in the South at a time when people did more listening and accepting. It made one seem very radical in disobeying. At the time, I took the initiative to disagree with a professor about an incident in American history. I realized that when I know I am right, I must speak.

From that time on I began to look at political struggles and power that can be brought to bear at the voting polls and the fact that black Americans were not voting, in some areas. Places where they were paying taxes but not voting.

By then I had graduated from college and was in my first job. I resigned and went down to rural Alabama, where no blacks were voting. I just went on faith to do what I was called to do: to help the people who were less powerful (I was not powerful but the road to education does open a gate and I did have this). You have to be willing to give up something, until I have given, until I feel it, I don't feel I have given enough.

What does 'called upon to do' mean to you?

It comes out of my Christian background. I have always been a Presbyterian and as you see I am working in a Presbyterian college. Our basic belief is that everyone is as important as everyone else. I have always believed that I have no other calling than to be involved in the things in which Christ came and in keeping with that I have always been heavily involved in peacemaking issues. Peacemaking to me is a calling, as is feeding the hungry, as is clothing the naked. It is doing anything that is morally and ethically right to create a balance and an equitable system for all people — economic justice.

Economic justice is not something we have today. Is it part of your religious belief that you would pursue political action in order to bring economic justice?

I would pursue whatever it takes. It is not that I think everyone should be equally wealthy or equally poor, but I certainly do believe in comparable pay for comparable work and the elimination of racism, sexism and all the kinds of things that stand in the way of justice.

It takes time, it has taken time. Women have been known through the years as nurturers and that is OK. But I have long since realized that it is time for us to effect change. Hopefully, change for the improvement of humankind. This leads me to the way we teach people to care for humanity; it is through literature, politics, the arts. I guess you could say I am a holdout for the humanities.

What have been some experiences of real renewal and joy for you?

To see those first voters, old people, one-half century old, go to the polls and vote.

What were some tumultuous times for you, times you really struggled, as a political woman?

As I go back to the sit-ins and rallies in the Deep South and remember trying to get served in restaurants, having to drive hundreds of miles looking for some place to stay and passing up decent hotels. There have been times when I said, 'Now why does a just God let something like this go on?' When crosses were burnt in our yard, and part of our garage was burned down and I said, 'Why God? Why us?' Those were the testing times.

Yet, when the civil rights movement got to the point (and we haven't arrived) where black Americans didn't have to drive miles to get a decent meal, it made me very happy. I thought it is a step, maybe small, but it is in the right direction. It was a force for change. ○

'Working for change is something women are naturals at. Women, by virtue of their sex, have to change all the time; their families change and women cope.'

— Marge Mullen, conservationist and feminist
Soldotna

JOURNAL

Rosita F. Worl is editor and publisher of Alaska Native News. She is a former professor of anthropology with the University of Alaska.

Women of Alaska:

Alaska women have the ability, power and strength to overcome the social, political and economic obstacles to equality. As a group we are formidable! Yet our group is comprised of individuals like yourself. Standing together is our source of strength. Alaska women need each other to help each other.

People often ask how Alaska Natives and American Indians have survived the centuries of oppression and deprivation encountered with discrimination. The answer lies in their socialization patterns and value system. From earliest childhood, they are trained to consider the group. They are taught to view themselves as a member of the group. Individual success is group success. Individual failure is perceived as the failure of the group.

Women, on the other hand, have not been socialized to consider themselves as members of a group. Many women do not identify with other women. As a consequence, some women do not view the inequality encountered by other women as relevant to them. Many women do not even perceive that they are the objects of sexual discrimination. They fail to recognize that sexual inequality is systematically perpetuated by our institutions and ideologies.

Many of these women are lulled into a passive and sometimes unconscious acceptance of sexual inequality. Unfortunately, other women may actively renounce the efforts of women who are promoting sexual equality. While we decry the actions of these women, we must not become embroiled in conflicts with them. Neither should we acquiesce to their criticisms.

Our efforts to overcome sexual inequality must be a positive and unified response. We must seek ways to reveal how our beliefs and attitudes are used to structure inequality in our social, economic and political systems.

Striving for sexual equality does not mean that we are seeking to destroy the family unit. We seek only to end patriarchal domination and the subordination of women. We seek to have equal opportunities.

We can each in our own way promote sexual equality. The first step, of course, must be to identify areas of sexual inequality. We must assess the reasons and basis for this unequal state. We must then initiate some action if we seek a better tomorrow for women. Ideally we should join women's organizations which are striving to enhance the status of women.

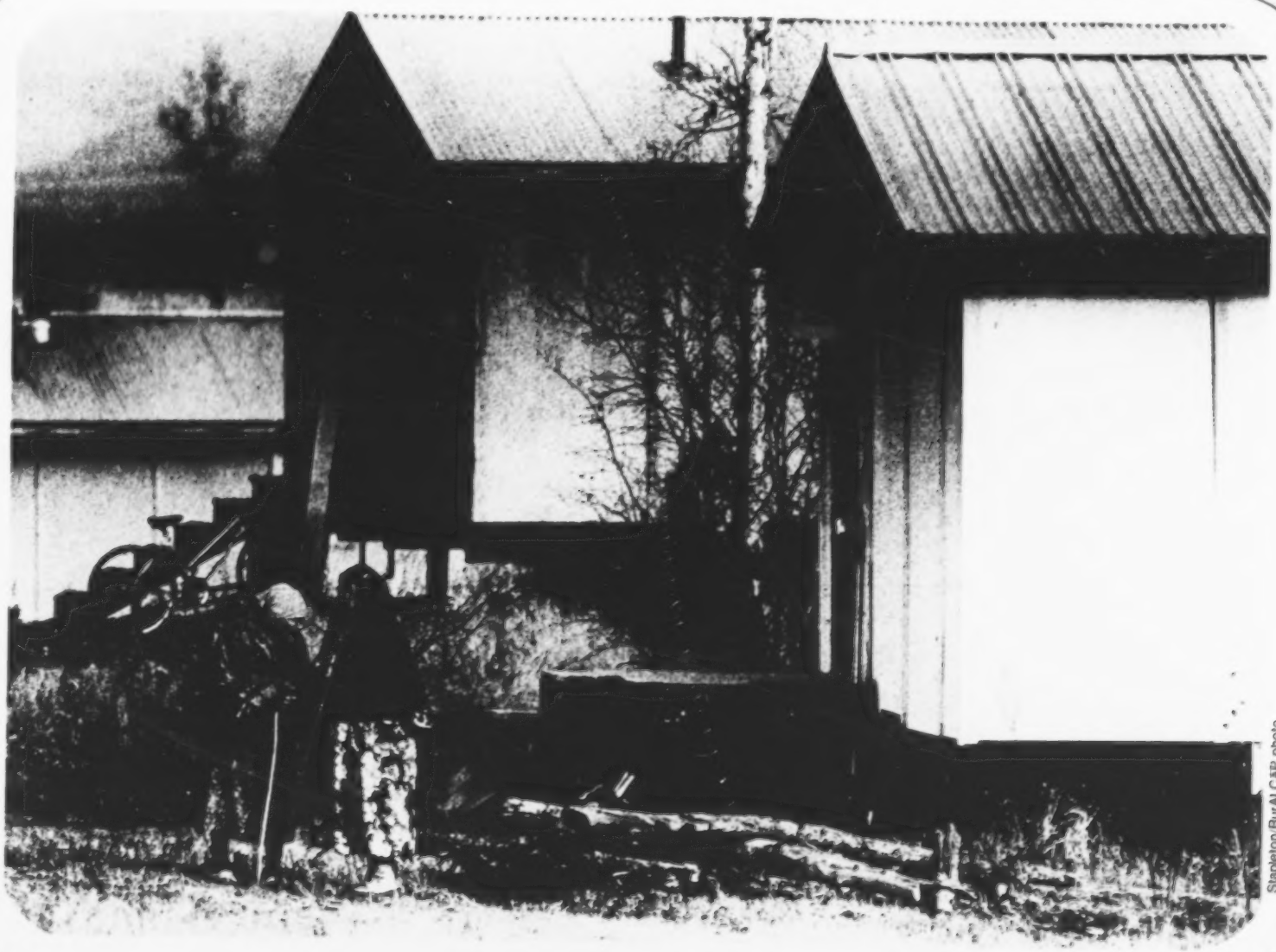
Sexual equality will not occur independent of action. We cannot accept that the benevolence of others will change our state. The greatest improvements will come with the coalescence of women into a unified action-oriented group.

— Rosita F. Worl

'To me every day is a new day. I can't wait to get started. I mean, if you don't dream, how will you know what is truth?'

— Fran Tate, restaurateur and businesswoman
Barrow

JOURNAL


Stapleton/RurALCAP photo

'Don't be careful. Get out and do something. If it is a little hard, good; do it twice. Get courage, trust what you believe in and trust what is inside of you.'

— Rosie Porter, newspaper editor
Bethel

JOURNAL

Charlie Mae Moore:

'I will walk that extra mile'

Charlie Mae Moore is director of teacher certification for the State of Alaska, and she can be found today in a high-powered Department of Education office in Juneau. But it was not always so.

In 1955 she could be found working as a teacher, adult educator, health center assistant, radio operator and occasional maintenance worker in the village of Chevak — near Bethel, but a long way from her birthplace of Jacksonville, Fla.

In 1957 she could be found in Unalakleet, in 1965 in Bethel, in 1967 in Juneau — always teaching, learning, counseling, writing, building programs, working to better the communities. By 1978 she had served in nearly every imaginable educational capacity and put her talents to work all over Alaska.

Charlie Mae Moore was a 25-year-old magna cum laude graduate of Wiley College and an expatriate of the Deep South when she stepped off the plane in Chevak. Today she is a 53-year-old black woman with a commitment to humanity, a lasting indignation at racism and discrimination, and a belief in the human capacity for achievement.

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What do you remember about living and teaching in the Bush?

I think the thing that really impacted my life in the Bush was that I learned so much.

I have never seen people with a greater tolerance, and so kind. I sometimes felt like I should have paid them for my first two or three years instead of me receiving money. There was so much I didn't know. How patient they were, how tolerant they were of me trying to superimpose some ideas that were just not workable. I had to realize the difference between idealism and realism; there is a definite balance and they helped me learn it. They brought me warmth and compassion, they brought values to my family of sensitivity, warmth and an appreciation for a culture that I dearly love and treasure to this day.

They were my friends then and they always will be.

'A favorite word around here is assimilation. It is like triumph or something.'

— Clare Swan, chief of Kenaitze Indian tribe
Kenai

JOURNAL

'There was so much I didn't know. How patient they were, how tolerant they were of me trying to superimpose some ideas that were just not workable. I had to realize the difference between idealism and realism; there is a definite balance and they helped me learn it.'

How was it that you came to Bush Alaska?

I lived in the South and it was a dual school system. I attended Spellman College at the time of Martin Luther King.

With the dual school system there was always a surplus of black teachers. Whenever I almost had a job, they would say, 'Are you a Negro?' — the accepted terminology in those days — and I would say, 'Yes,' and they would say, 'Well, I am sorry; we already filled the position.'

After crushing blow after blow, my girlfriend went to the post office one day and said she found a notice on the bulletin board saying, 'Go to Alaska; they need teachers.'

I filled out the application, sent it in and waited a year. I got a notice asking if I was interested, I said 'yes,' and came north with a 6-week-old baby and a 2-year-old son. The farther we flew, the smaller the plane got. By the time I got to Bethel I knew that there was no turning back, that I would never see civilization again, so why worry!

I remember how I was dressed in Bethel. I was so perfect, I had on high-heeled shoes and white gloves; my Momma told me to always wear gloves. When we landed and I got out of the plane, the first thing I did was fall onto my baby on the tundra.

As I looked up, I saw the man who was to be my superintendent for the next three years at Chevak. He said, 'You must be Mrs. Moore.'

After two weeks waiting in Bethel, this young man comes over to me and says it is time to go to Chevak. Not to worry though; they have not had time to build the school. Here was this 25-year-old woman with two babies scared to death. I had talked with the BIA person and talked about teaching English and reading. We proceeded to Chevak.

We landed and I said, 'What is that?' The pilot said, 'It is fish, they are drying fish.' I mean I didn't know anything, all I knew is that I had a piece of paper with the village's name on it and how many people lived in the village. Everybody came to the mail plane and out steps this black young woman with her two babies, her husband and her luggage. They said, 'black teacher' in Yupik.

I spent two years there. We started an adult education program which was the first in the state. We started a mother's club and we tried to put together a council to help with the village children. We tried to assist as much as possible in helping with health problems. We lost a lot of people to TB in those days.

Did you learn to speak Yupik?

My children did. I always worked with a translator because a translator could provide support for us. I was just as frustrated as they were; it was a two-way street. Here I was talking too fast for those who understood English because I didn't realize that they had to translate in their head. For years I felt guilty for this; I learned to slow down. I used to tape myself in the classroom and see how the children were responding, how often they could say something.

What was it like working with children that were bilingual when you were not?

I think the essence was wondering if I was really getting through. Was I really being understood and able to communicate, were they getting feedback from me which was helping to build their self-image and giving them the self-esteem I felt they needed? Now I realize, looking back, I must have learned somewhere how important it is for kids to have their self-esteem. If you have self-esteem, you click with everything else.

You said you love the culture. Is there any way you can describe that love?

Just the peace I found. It was so peaceful, so understanding of my ways of having to learn. That was their home, and I came there and knew that at some stage in my life, I was going to leave and that wasn't true for everybody there. When I talked to the old folks, I had such serene thoughts about what they said.

I began to really know who I was because I was so happy. I mean to set nets, catch and clean fish, go hunting, to see my hip boots bog down in the tundra and watch my children grow up with a deep sense of appreciation for people not knowing that they were different.

I came up in territorial days and we were given a trip outside by the government every two years. It was not until my kids went Outside that they realized they were different. They were terrified because they had never seen any other black kids. They had their race, their culture within our home and they were proud of it.

I passed on the things my mother taught me: work hard, go to college. I taught them manners at the table, the things we do on Sundays, the food, the music and the prayers, reading of the Bible and bowing of the head. Just because I was in Chevak didn't mean I would lose my culture, or the same in Unalakleet. But all in all, Chevak was a great place, a kind place and a

'I am basically a flag-waving patriot in the sense that I think we have the most fabulous system in the world and I am afraid that I am not talking about our economic system — which I have some serious problems with — I am talking about our political system, I am talking about democracy.'

— Beryl Johnson, activist
Anchorage

JOURNAL

wonderful place to raise my children.

Did you ever feel a longing for your own black culture?

Well you know, I grew up in Jacksonville, Florida. My father passed away when I was 10 and I was adopted. After being raised by my adopted mother, in six years I was ready for college. I was a debutante when I came out of high school. I can't imagine it today but we were still trying to change the white man's world, still trying to be right in there. I remember I wanted my mother to be so proud of me; she had the greatest impact on me.

You asked if I missed my culture? Well, I became uneasy and began to feel a lot of unrest after I finished high school. I began to be disenchanted with people. Such a thing as white water and colored water became very offensive to me.

I found the South had caused me to become angry. I began to look at the water fountain with these new feelings and new awareness; and Woolworth's came into town and built a lunch counter for us. We sat in the back and paid the same prices. I began to feel that all the nice clothes and the way my mother had trained me, white gloves, wearing a hat to town and dressing properly, never would make me good enough to eat at that counter. I resented having to walk by those people who just because of the color of their skin were allowed to sit there.

I became very restless, even before 1964. When I moved up here, I knew deep down inside that I was leaving, but I also knew the fight was not over; it was just beginning. I knew that even though I was looking for peace and serenity, I was still in contact.

How often did you go home, how did your family react after being raised in a village?

Every two years. I guess the thing that bothered me when I took my children out was that I could see very slow changes. I became very angry because I said to myself, 'I pay taxes, just like that white woman standing there, but my children are going to have to suffer, to have different treatment and there is no way I am going to live and see this. They are going to change, not going to have to pay the penalty that I did. They are not going to have to drink the water with two signs when the water is coming out of the same pipe.'

I came back and did not go out for four years.

When we were talking earlier, you said somewhere you learned how important it is to give children a sense of self-esteem. It sounds like you, as a black child, learned in an experiential way how important it was not to feel put down, to stand up for what you believe in. Do you think you gave what you didn't get, but knew you needed?

Yes. I guess so, they often said to me, 'You have to walk in someone else's moccasins, or sandals, or mukluks, or boots.'

'Was I really being understood and able to communicate, were they getting feedback from me which was helping to build their self-image and giving them the self-esteem I felt they needed? Now I realize, looking back, I must have learned somewhere how important it is for kids to have their self-esteem. If you have self-esteem, you click with everything else.'

A white teacher would not be able to give the gift in the same way because the experiences of being a minority are different than being one of the dominant culture.

Yeah, but I didn't even know how I would be accepted by them. It was like being caught in two worlds. One world says, 'You can't do this and you can't do that.' Then you come to this other world. The people are understanding and tolerant and loving. But I was terrified that I would make many cultural mistakes and offend people. I had fear.

But let me go back to my childhood. You asked me about it and I said it was basically happy given the confines society put on it and my people.

I have always maintained that you don't legislate people's attitudes; you can pass thousands of laws and I am not saying I am against laws that cause things to change. I am saying the laws may be on the books but people's attitudes can still persist. I maintain now that discrimination in Alaska is a very sophisticated element. We don't practice discrimination now like in 1956 or '48 or '44 but the point is attitudes take longer than just changing the law to change.

Let's take an example, here we are sitting together in Alaska. But you might see me in a small town, and it doesn't have to be in the South, and people would think why is she with her (white with black).

There was another little incident that happened in state government. There was this young black lady left totally by herself to sit. There was this barrier so she would have a little office. What they missed was they put up an artificial barrier by leaving her alone and isolating her. She was from the Deep South, had never been around whites. You put up a barrier there and never speak to her or recognize her — 'How's your family?' that type of thing — then, this young lady is suddenly unhappy with her job and they don't understand why.

'I am very much aware this is the best place for me to be. The rest of the world is always so terribly appealing and glamorous, but I chose to come back to Alaska and I have a purpose here.'

— Diane Tickell, Episcopal priest
Cordova

JOURNAL

How did you make it through some of the difficult times?

I read a lot. I walked a lot. I was too busy to be disappointed with life; I was too excited. I tried to keep up with the political process; I was interested in how politics was going to impact this country and bring about change and who the key people were going to be.

I was deeply concerned with the leadership of my own people, with Martin Luther King. I remember the days of Jackie Robinson with deep sadness of the things he was subjected to. I didn't read about those things, I lived them. I remember when Hank Aaron started playing ball . . . God, was I proud of him. I guess what I am saying is that through all these other things, groups of people, interacting with other cultures and all, I never lost sight of my own people and their plight.

I often think of what my mother used to say to me, and in that day and time, I can't take it away from her. She was a remarkable woman; she would say, 'But you need to be twice as good,' and you would hear me say this if you worked on this floor now. I don't want to go home early, I want to leave late. It feels like there is something driving me, saying, 'You have to be exceptional, outstanding.'

The greatest thing I want out of life is for people to remember. You tend to get out of life what you put into it. If you don't give it anything, don't give yourself to other people, give something to live, you aren't going to get much out of it. I am basically a loner. A member of a lot of groups and functions, but I don't run with a group.

What are some of your most important civic and political commitments?

I am very concerned with equal opportunity. I have been very active. I have quietly gone toe-to-toe with the city over contractors who are out of compliance. I go down and I don't see any women, I don't see any minorities and I ask them what happened to Executive Order 1124 and they say, 'Huh? What?'

Four months ago, we found three contractors out of compliance and they had lawyers for three weeks. I told them they could have hired two minorities and paid them what they paid the lawyers and been in compliance.

I sometimes get down and disillusioned. I think that women have moved fast. We have moved so fast in the last few years, (but) we are not yet where we are supposed to be.

I was talking one day about minorities in high positions and I told the governor, 'If you want to see how many minorities there are up there, go down and look at the parking lot in the morning. Tell me how many minorities get out of reserved parking spaces.'

He looked at me and said, 'I heard you were a little upset today.'

I said, 'You sent for me, you called me out of the school district and you want to know why I get unhappy. I am angry. I go to state hearings all over this state. There is nothing we are doing about equal opportunity except promising people. You put it on stationary, you put it everywhere, but when you get down to the person who is hiring, sitting across that desk and making a decision, that's where it is at. Not the commissioner's office, but in that person sitting there and making decisions.'

Alaska has come a long way. We at the Equal Opportunity Commission — Lisa Rudd, Vince Casey, J.P. Jones, Byron Mallot — we all had impact. We were radical in the sense that we wanted change, not violence but change. Violence mentally, yes — thought processes, sense of direction. All of these things must take place; we have to facilitate and activate people to bring about change.

You aren't going to make everyone happy. I am sorry if people find it offensive that I am not currently pleased with our system. If offends me to be shoved aside, it offends me not to be recognized that I am an intelligent black woman and very proud of it. That I have studied, that I have traveled.

I guess I am saying that there was so much substance to my life. When money was tight we took vacations; I was in Cuba and Europe and all over. I want to leave an impact on my state, I never want to be satisfied with mediocrity.

What it comes down to is that I have a deep commitment to life itself. I love children, I think people are the neatest things and I don't like to see people in anguish. I will walk that extra mile, work that extra hour to avoid that pain. What does it matter if you help someone out? All in all, there have been the good times and the bad times and the good far outweighs the bad. ❍

'What it comes down to is that I have a deep commitment to life itself. I love children, I think people are the neatest things and I don't like to see people in anguish. I will walk that extra mile, work that extra hour to avoid that pain. What does it matter if you help someone out? All in all, there have been the good times and the bad times and the good far outweighs the bad.'

'I preferred the days knocking on doors in Fairview. It was really grassroots organizing and there is a lot of strength in that.'

— Jewel Jones, municipal Director of Social Services
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Alice Solomon:

'I had to start something'

In Barrow, the Mother's Club is a force, and so is Alice Solomon.

The 64-year-old Solomon has served the Barrow Mother's Club twice as president, once as vice president and several times as secretary. Her political and organizational skills were honed through service on the borough assembly, involvement with education, and coping with domestic violence in the community.

* * *

The Mother's Club was started in the 1920s to try and help mothers have good homes for their children and family. This included things like talking about education and health. The Mother's Club meets every Friday to talk about their children and what is happening in town.

What has been the main activity of the club?

The club is a great force in the community. Mostly, we would act like truant officers making sure the kids were in school. If they were not in school, the club would send someone to the house of the child to find out why.

Why did you get involved with setting up a battered women's shelter?

After seeing so much violence it came to my mind that I had to start something. I organized several meetings and we discussed the shelter idea. After we could not find a place, the Barrow Mother's Club endorsed the idea and turned it over to the North Slope Health and Social Services. I didn't really get it started, I just wanted to make sure those ladies had a place to go. ○

Photo by Steve Lindbeck

Darlene Crawford: 'caring'

I think I am the only woman who has ever been mayor here. Ten years ago, I was in for one term and now I have been in for four years. A woman can bring something to being a mayor in a small town or even in a big town that a man doesn't. I think there is a different depth of feeling or caring about social problems.

The biggest drawback of being a woman in the position is that men think a woman can't do the job. This is not particular to Seldovia; it is a universal thing. The different men on the council didn't think I had the qualifications to be mayor. They didn't think it was something a woman should do.

It made me really angry and then I thought I should consider the source. Abe Lincoln said that only 50 percent of the people are ever going to like what you do. So I figure they are just the other 50 percent! ○

— Darlene June Crawford
Mayor and 25-year resident of Seldovia

'Today you can plan your children. You have a choice. If women are not damn careful, that choice will be taken away. We must fight for the choice of if and when to have children.'

— Beverly Dunham, editor and publisher, Seward Phoenix-Log
Seward

JOURNAL

Susan Clark: *'being a mother has radicalized me'*

Lobbying has grown from a particular personal interest into a nearly full-time vocation for Susan Clark of Juneau.

She began her lobbyist's career as a parent concerned about day care issues. Today she is legislative chair for the American Association of University Women, a member of the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, and the owner of a fiber business.

Clark was born in Vallejo, Calif. in 1944 and raised on the East Coast. She came to Juneau for a year in 1968, went Outside while her husband was in the Army, and returned for good with her husband and children in 1973. Her story is of the evolution of a female lobbyist.

* * *

What brought you into lobbying?

The day care issue is what got me into the field and the political process for the first time in my life.

It wasn't until late college, when I got married and had children that I was, for the first time, placed in a stereotypical box that I couldn't get out of. I felt trapped, like I didn't have an existence outside of this little box.

When my oldest daughter was ready for pre-school, I used it as a way to get necessary space for myself.

When we moved to Juneau there was no pre-school available, so I made use of part-time day care.

I was trying to get the League of Women Voters to help secure some local funding for the continuation of a model city day care program. I ended up on their board. The city had no money, so we went to the legislature.

Then I began to learn about the legislative process. At the time, the League did not have a day care position, so part of the process was to first become politically aware. I credit the League with the beginnings of my political education.

How did you decide your strategy for lobbying?

It gets refined as you go along. At first you go only to the people in power you feel would support you . As you become more politically involved, you learn the importance of working with people of various political persuasions.

But, you don't have to know the specifics to get started. You have to care; if you care about an issue and are willing to put in the energy to follow it, you'll learn.

The place I am at now is looking at the power behind coalitions and networking. If you have an issue, say day care, learn who the various leaders are in organizations related to the issue; network and build support for the issue.

You learn some lessons. The first lesson is that decisions are not made on the floor of the House and Senate. You try to never let a vote on something you care about come to the floor of the legislature without counting your votes beforehand. That is a big lesson most people don't understand. You then realize that major work is done in committee, so you focus attention there.

It is our job to soften people. Our system works because of compromise and that is what we are lobbying for; we want something, another side wants something and compromise is the outcome. You must be a pragmatist and treat people as human beings.

Being a mother has radicalized me to the point where my activism has taken over my whole house! I did not like being the mother of pre-schoolers. I felt trapped, boxed in and put down by society. I was used to intellectual conversation and there I was talking to a 1-year-old all day and I couldn't handle it.

I am committed to families having children because of the kind of love that comes from a parent-child relationship. It can't be duplicated in other relationships. There is a special trust there that gives you the freedom to love. But I feel strongly that child care is not a woman's job but a responsibility that must be shared by both parents. I was frustrated and angry and upset about the rest of the world assigning child care the same status as that of being a janitor.

I needed to define myself. I got involved with the consciousness raising of the '70s and that helped wake me up and give me options.

'I believe that a woman can be a mother and still be her own person. I think people worry too much about all that today. You must do your own thing first, you must be true to yourself. We all have a responsibility in this old world. The main thing in life is to be caring and to care for people no matter if the people around you respond.'

— Susan English, community leader
Seldovia

JOURNAL

A Letter to Young Women:

The most significant thing I have ever done was to found the first women's liberation group in Anchorage. When I first read about women's liberation in Newsweek magazine in about 1967, I thought, "This is the cause for me. For years, I have been involved in groups that worked for civil rights for black people and for Native people. This women's liberation is my cause and I know that I have been discriminated against all my life because I was female."

As a young woman, this response may be puzzling to you because discrimination against women in 1982 is more subtle than it was in 1967 or 1970. Feminism or women's liberation is very relevant. I urge you to avoid the tragedy of the early 1900s, when the first feminist movement in America, which started in the 1850s, gradually died out because women forgot how bad and discriminatory things had been and still were.

When I was a freshman in college, the counseling office asked us to write down our career plans. I wrote, "minister, attorney or foreign correspondent." The counselor looked at my paper, pondered it for a few moments and looked up and said, "Well, you'll change your mind."

Unfortunately, he was right. The next year, I visited three attorneys trying to get information on what attorneys did. They all discouraged me from this career pursuit.

Your temptation to regard women's liberation or feminism as irrelevant to your life now and in the future comes partly from the magnificent successes of the movement. Discrimination is not blatant. It is more likely, today, that guidance counselors would emphasize the feminine interest on your vocational test and respond positively to any passive, feminine behavior rather than discourage you openly from pursuing well-paid, so-called masculine, jobs.

Women still do the majority of the housework, work in jobs that are low-paying, and are forced in many subtle ways into powerless positions.

Feminism seems to have achieved much. Increased enrollment in women's high school athletics is phenomenal. Discrimination against women in the job market is illegal, at least in large companies and institutions. Some law schools and medical schools have enrollments where women are 50 percent of the student body, an unheard-of figure in 1970. It is still very difficult for a young woman to become an engineer, a plumber, a carpenter or a college professor. The way the young woman lawyer and young woman doctor will face discrimination will be in promotions and income level as they grow older.

Young women who have put most of their energies into careers are asking about the pleasures of having families and children as they enter their 30s without having had a baby. What I want to say to those young women is that the feminists of the '60s and '70s struggled valiantly to give you a choice, a family, or both. That choice is one which most former generations of women never had. A choice does not make life easy but it makes it freer and more meaningful. Please do not throw away the choice in your search for security or family. Choices are what we feminists fought for and are fighting for.

If you are a young woman, you will still face discrimination and oppression in your life. Because men hold political power and they hold power in almost every family where the woman is so busy having babies and taking care of them that she has no independent income.

The phrase that men used to use frequently — "Keep her pregnant and barefoot and she won't cause you any trouble" — is still bandied about in certain circles. To be barefoot and pregnant is the ultimate in powerlessness unless you have an independent income. It is the basis of many a woman's decision to not leave a man who beats her. Do not allow romantic love to blind you to the fundamental fact that a woman's biological condition can render her powerless unless she takes steps to prevent it.

What I would like to say to you is that talking to other women is still the first step in liberation. Talking about sexual harassment on the job, about the demands of your men friends that may be harmful to you, and about the protectionism of your parents with other young women is the way to clarify to yourself what obstacles you face in carving out a life for yourself.

Finally, I'd like to say that I think the purpose of Anchorage women's liberation which was stated in every edition of "On The Way," our newsletter, remains a useful and important goal for the young women of today and of the future: "We seek flexibility of roles for both men and women in our society. We hope to obtain equality for men and women in job opportunities, professional endeavors and in all day-to-day relationships."

— Amy Bollenback

Amy Bollenbach is a psychology teacher at Anchorage Community College.

'The mother/daughter relationship is extremely important in the daughter's formation of identity. Mother sets the tone for direction for the daughter.'

— Sharon Jean, borough assembly member
Soldotna

JOURNAL

Photo by Rob Stapleton

'To say that there is nothing to do is unacceptable, because there is so much ahead for us to survive.'

— Georgianna Lincoln, Doyon Corp. board member
Fairbanks

JOURNAL

Paula Easley:

'I work to make jobs'

Photo courtesy of Resource Development Council

Paula Easley makes her own way, and carries people along with her as she does.

She is a women's rights advocate at the head of a male-dominated, conservative organization. She is a widely respected public figure, an activist in government and politics, and a businesswoman who has owned and operated several businesses. She has fought for day care and abortion rights from the same perspective that moves her to seek economic development and opportunity for Alaskans.

Born in Chicago and reared in Louisville, Kentucky, she has refused to allow handicaps — divorced parents, a childhood bout with rheumatic fever, being widowed at an early age, single parenthood — stand in the way of education, activism and achievement. She came to Alaska in 1962, homesteaded at Stony River, built a series of secretarial and consulting firms, and today serves as executive director of Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc.

...

What are some of the Resource Development Council's main issues?

Our most recent big project was the trans-Alaska gas line. We carried out a nationwide campaign to get the line to come through Alaska instead of Canada. Another area of focus has been in transportation; we have worked for the expansion of the Alaska Railroad. Finally, we just carried out a strategy to defeat the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's desire to create numerous marine sanctuaries in Alaska. A lot of my work includes mobilizing people, researching issues, conducting a letter-writing campaign, preparing testimony for hearings.

I relate so much of my work to being a woman. I work for a good economy; the difference between me and a lot of other women is that I believe in working to make jobs in our economy. When the economy goes bad, women are the hardest hit; their jobs are often the first to go. You know, except for female engineers, women are not very involved in this organization. Instead of being active and creating the climate economically that they want or integrating their ideas into the organization, they assume we don't listen to social concerns.

Most women are more liberal than I and are not willing to look at the economics of their stands. I have been promoting and developing Alaska since I came here in 1962.

How did you happen to come to Alaska?

I had family here; my sister and her husband were homesteading in Stony River, a ways from Bethel. We were living in Louisville, Kentucky. Let me tell you, if you think women's roles are prescribed here, go there! It was a boring place to live. We came up here and I enjoyed the fresh air so much. I know a lot of people consider it a contradiction that I love fresh air and am in the field of developing our resources. Well, it isn't and I do love the air. Anyways, we moved out there with my sister to develop an industry building cabins.

Do you have any memories of homesteading that stand out?

There was a time when everyone decided they needed to go into town for supplies and such. We had a lodge, a trading post, a radio — so someone

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'If the door is open, go in.'

— Hazel Heath, businesswoman, former mayor
Homer

JOURNAL

had to stay. We drew straws and I lost.

I thought, 'No problem, I can handle two weeks.' Well, the very first day all hell broke loose. The caretaker decided he would bring in a case of booze, so he stayed drunk the whole two weeks. The very same day 7-8 people came in to stay at the lodge. I was running the trading post. They hauled away the school teacher in a straitjacket and I had to teach school for 2 weeks — all 6 grades, and I had never taught in my life. I had to keep the fires going in all the buildings and had never cut wood before, never lifted these huge logs that went into a 50-gallon drum.

I found some kind of superhuman energy; I went all around the clock. I had to handle the radio station and I had never given weather reports before.

It was quite an experience. I learned from that experience that I can do anything I want to do.

Why did you come back from there?

I got very sick. I have never been so sick. I really wanted to die. This went on for about six weeks and finally I was flown into the hospital in Anchorage. The doctor told me a couple more days and I would have been dead. I had pneumonia so bad my lungs were hurt. I was really alarmed. I said, 'That is it.'

I had a little baby out there and thought, 'If I can't get medical help, I won't live there.' So we moved back to Anchorage. With the exception of a short period in Juneau I have been living here ever since.

This is something people in urban areas don't understand, this lack of facilities. They think the government spends all this money on the Bush, but things cost money and you are talking about basic necessities being things like a toilet and running water.

'I grew up with my mother and grandmother always telling me I could do anything I put my mind to. I got out into the real world and realized that is not true. I kept running up against people saying no. I just fought it all the way. I probably buffaloed my way into more jobs, yet I was never replaced by less than two people.'

How do you reconcile all these different parts of you — homesteader and developer?

If you look at the development that has taken place in Alaska, most of the pollution we have is caused by unpaved roads and automobiles. One good thing about the environmental movement is that we have laws today which protect our state's environment. We are fortunate because only 2 percent of our gross product in Alaska is manufacturing. We can, we must, develop it the right way. I don't know people who want it any other way. We really have the opportunity.

What special qualities do you bring to your work?

I think I am much more sensitive to all the interests of people all over the state. I have lived out in the Bush, I have lived in the capital city, I am close to people in Fairbanks, Valdez, etc. I know what their problems are.

I think women have a tendency to look at the more personal things that affect people's lives, the quality-of-life things. To me, these are very important. I talk about the economy and doing what is best for Alaska, which is our criteria for development. I see quality of life as a major component. When I look at quality of life, I know you can't have that without a job. There ain't no quality of life standing in the unemployment line. When unemployment is high we have crime at a higher rate; child abuse, alcoholism, all are aggravated by high unemployment. Providing stable, long-term employment for the people who live here is working on improving the quality of life.

I think the recent oil lease sales have put us in a position of optimism. I know that a change in administration is also having positive effects. I get five, six company officials in here every week; they see the light at the end of the tunnel, they know business will be welcomed here.

Are you involved in any political activities?

Most of my activities are related to my job. We are non-partisan, so if I work on a campaign, it is in a low-key way. I think it is very important to elect people who do support development. I have worked in a roundabout way for abortion rights. I published a paper of my research and sent that to all candidates for the primary. I did the research, so it put the arguments on a factual basis. I am very pro-choice.

I have always been a person who can motivate other people. This is my medium for effecting change.

I grew up in Louisville. When I married at 20, my mother-in-law was appalled at the fact that I was going to school, working and married. I am sure the fact that my mother was divorced when I was a baby affected me. I never wanted to be dependent on anyone else. I have raised my own →

'Teenagers don't care for their lives. Worriness becomes stronger, they have accidents, drunk, kill themselves. I hate it.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

JOURNAL

children that way; you never know when you will need that strength and understanding.

It was a really good thing, too. My husband became suddenly sick and died several weeks later. There I was, alone with two little children. I felt grateful that I had a career; at the time I owned a business. Without it, it would have been much more difficult to make it through.

I had another experience that changed me considerably. I was working for IBM; I was the secretary to the office products division manager. I was doing much more work than my job description called for and my boss was trying to get my description changed to the position of educational services representative for Alaska. There were only five in the country and I thought I would be perfect for one up here. Well, the branch manager didn't want me to have the job. I couldn't figure out why; I was a terrific employee, always had new ideas. I couldn't figure it out.

I found out later he didn't want me to be the representative because it would involve traveling around to other cities in Alaska. He felt that I was too sexy and would lead his salesmen astray. It took a year of interviews with me, with my husband, my boss, before I was offered the job.

By that time I left to create my own business. I told myself, 'After that, I will never subject myself to that treatment again.' Today, that would be a wonderful sex discrimination suit. Women will always face the reality of discrimination, but I will not take that treatment again.

How about today in your dealing with business. Any experiences with discrimination?

There is a conservative bent with the people I deal with. I guess I have been here long enough and gained enough respect that I don't confront it much. There is one board where there are more chauvinists than you could imagine sitting in one place; I worked things through with them, proved my competence and now they have hired another woman. It is important for women to see women in leadership and management roles, but it is also important for men to see women there.

Why is it that women seem to be moving into the marginal and mid-level management positions within the corporate world, but are locked out of the top, key positions?

> 'The difference between me and a lot of other women is that I believe in working to make jobs in our economy. When the economy goes bad, women are the hardest hit; their jobs are often the first to go.'

The men are conservative. They still want to see women in the home. They are threatened. Regardless of how good she is, they are not confident she can be as good.

When the next generation of leaders comes on, it will be different. I have a younger brother who just graduated from law school. Now, his attitude is totally different; he sees no difference in women than men in terms of capabilities. There are many more male feminists. You will never get a 60-year-old to say he is a feminist. But you do see and hear younger men saying these things.

I'll tell you, having people tell me no is what really got me determined to be something. I grew up with my mother and grandmother always telling me I could do anything I put my mind to. I got out into the real world and realized that is not true. I kept running up against people saying no. I just fought it all the way. I probably buffaloed my way into more jobs, yet I was never replaced by less than two people.

Anything else that has really influenced you?

Yes. When I became a widow, I was a threat to other married couples all of a sudden. A lot of your married friends do drop by the wayside, no question about it.

I realized how important my friendships with women were. Over the years, I have had a tremendous support system with women; we have a group that gets together a couple of times a month and we share and help each other out with problems. I would have never made it through difficult periods without that kind of support.

I don't have any great desire to get married again. Twice is enough. I am happy being single. I think that women who decide to be single are becoming more accepted. That did not used to be true. Formerly, you had to be part of a couple. I am very comfortable going places and to events by myself. Ten or 12 years ago when I had to go places alone for business or travel, it was not well accepted. Now, you don't need an escort. If you go somewhere with a person, it is because you want to, not because you have to. That is very liberating.

My advice to women who want to climb the ladder is: learn how to speak and write well. As you work your way up, you will be called on to give public speeches. Forget there is such a thing as an eight-hour day. There are plenty of jobs in Alaska where women can do anything. Every place I have worked I see this, but you have to be creative and put a lot of time and effort into the job to move up.

And my final piece of advice is: do it on your own; don't sleep your way to the top. It never works.

'Since I have been in the legislature (1958), there has been a splintering of public goals. Environmentalism had not raised its head; there was not a preservationists versus developmentalists mentality, no youth rebellion.'

— Irene Ryan, former legislator and Commissioner of Commerce
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Brenda Itta: *'give what we have'*

Brenda Itta is politically savvy, personally powerful and committed to her people. As city manager of Barrow, she wields plenty of influence over the growth and development of the oil-rich arctic.

Itta came to her post with a variety of experience. She was born in Barrow and educated at a Bureau of Indian Affairs school Outside. She served as an aide to Sen. Ernest Gruening, and worked as a lobbyist for her region in Washington, D.C. She was the first Alaska Native woman elected to the Alaska Legislature, in 1974-76, and is the immediate past president of the Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization.

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Tell me about your work in Washington D.C. and how it shaped your attitude about your region's development.

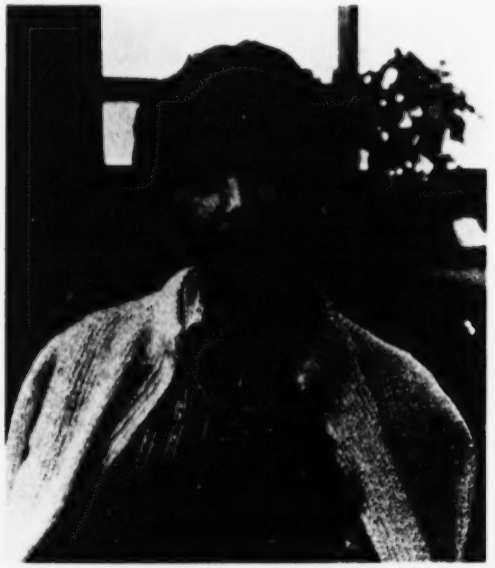
I traveled for Sen. Gruening throughout our region to more than 70 villages in an effort to establish a working relationship between his office and our people.

During that time I got a real fine look at our people. That is when my love for our people became strong. My commitment grew. Because I was representing our senator, there was a certain attitude of respect as a leader that I was not aware was developing at the time. It caused the people to share some of the injustices of their lives. That is when I started carrying their wishes to government.

I became heavily involved with Native affairs in the state. I was involved in the land claims settlement. I experienced a lot of pressure and a lot of opposition to the Native people.

When did you serve in the legislature?

I served in the state House of Representatives in 1974-76. I served on the House Finance Committee, chaired the subcommittee on Health and Social Services. I chose not to file again because I needed more inner confidence to better



serve my people. I needed to know who I was to cope with the pressures. If I don't take care of myself, I can't take care of anyone else. That was my limit.

Was there a conflict in values with you as a woman and a leader?

I gave that question to the Native leaders, especially the men. I told them that I have this inner conflict because of my upbringing. It has always been understood that the woman has a special role and so does the man and there is no conflict. Traditionally, the men have taken the lead and you are asking me to assume responsibility. I said, 'I don't want to jeopardize our way of life by competing with men. That is a very degrading position to be put in.' I made an agreement with them that if they wanted to have me in the House, they would talk any potential candidates against filing. They did and I was elected unanimously.

They answered my question this way: 'You know, Brenda, that is true; we have always had special roles, but on the other hand, we are in a war and a struggle to survive and our very heritage is being challenged. It does not matter whether you are a man, woman or child, we need your help.' With that kind of endorsement to ensure I wasn't disrupting our way of life, I went ahead and ran.

While in Juneau, I realized I was different. With the other women, there was a sense of arrogance and militancy with the women's liberation movement. I agreed with their reasons for liberation but I didn't like their style; it was divisive. It does not mean that I am passive. I can get my work done without adding on more divisiveness.

We have various forms of government in our land. Everything from church to village, to regional corporations. It is very important to respect our government and use it in a way that is beneficial to our people.

Leadership is not taken by a person, it is given to a person by the people based on their qualifications, their experiences and their love for the people. If it involves two worlds, the person has to be secure in their identity. There must be a working knowledge of both worlds. In leadership it is important to lead with a reflection of our rich heritage in our conduct and our character, the heritage our ancestors put in us.

Another important area is not to be too proud, because you have been given the position, an air of humbleness must mark the position. Too much pride alienates the people who put you there.

The Inupiat people have always taken pride in being honest; they can see right through a lie. Therefore it is very important to be honest. I encourage the young people to appreciate what we have, have a grateful heart. ○

'In Alaska, people don't have that superficialness one cultivates Outside. It is easier to get to the core of that person. A type of human vulnerability exists here.'

— Joan Bugbee Jackson, artist
Cordova

JOURNAL

Connie Taylor:
'carry your own weight'

Connie Taylor's life is a demonstration of independence, self-reliance, performance and hard work.

She grew up in California, the daughter of two University of California professors. She came to Alaska on her own in 1963, established herself in the fishing industry, and carved out her niche in the town of Cordova. She has been on the city council, run her own boat, opened a business and fought the political and business battles of the rough-and-tumble fishing industry.

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What is it like as a woman in fishing?

I believe I am the first woman skipper of a seining vessel in the (Prince William) Sound.

One of the things that happens, when you are a successful woman, is you are isolated from other women to a large extent, particularly in the fishing industry. You tend to have things to discuss with men and not have things to discuss with the average woman you run into on the street. I can't discuss babies, what they need or their diapers. I can discuss how to fix an engine. It leaves you isolated.

I think it is probably true with most women in industry. Women start climbing up ladders and sense that separation starting. I think a lot of them start backing down. You know you aren't one of the boys; you can't be. But you also aren't one of the girls; you really can't be that, either. I know it sounds like a warning to some women, but it is something that has to be addressed.

How have you dealt with the isolation?

I wouldn't say that it is something you totally resolve. You run into other women who have the same problem and there is an instant bond because other women feel the separation.

How did you get started in fishing?

Well, I wasn't around the water until I came to Alaska in 1963 and particularly to Cordova. I got an opportunity to go crab fishing and I liked it; one thing led to another. I started with a skiff that I traded two drums of diesel oil for. I had two outboard engines, and I scrounged some bolts out of the dump. It was a very low-budget operation.

I went from that to buying my own 34-foot vessel in 1969. I still have that vessel today. I named her Thetis, from Greek mythology. Thetis was Achilles' mother, the queen of the sea.

You spoke of your independence, the need to confront isolation. What else does a woman need to make it in fishing?

I think people are capable of doing anything they set out to do, if they are willing to make the effort. I didn't start out with the idea 10 or 15 years ago that I would be a seine boat captain.

I think the key for a woman to make it in what is a male establishment is to carry her own weight. This is in the sense that she doesn't require services from the men around her simply because she is a woman. That is why I have been accepted around here. Because I was so independent as a child it never occured to me that someone else would carry something down the dock for me.

Tell me about being a skipper.

One of the biggest responsibilities of a skipper is the people on your boat. Your crew is totally dependent on you and that is often scary. I have never had any close calls where the vessel was in danger. But there were times when it was more exciting than I like.

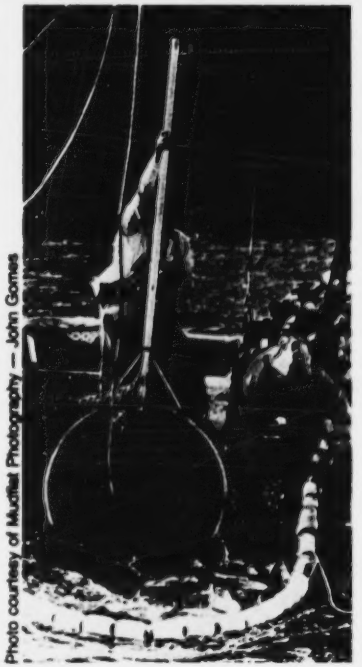

Photo courtesy of Mudflat Photography — John Gomes

Another side is the teamwork. Timing is essential. It is like clockwork. It pays, though. The sign of a highliner (the boat catching the most fish) is to put a broom up in the stern and I have done that a couple of times.

Are you comfortable with power?

I do have influence and power. A captain of a vessel has power. Power, authority and responsibility are things that go closely, hand-in-hand. There is no question, it would be nice to have days where I was on the back deck without responsibility.

I have less influence than men in the field. It is a sexist thing. It is a fact of life; accept it because you can't lick it. I believe you just gotta go out and do your own thing the best you can. You can't win them over by convincing them, you must demonstrate it.

Helping others get started is something I believe in. People probably see that. People helped me along the way and I think it is my obligation to help others get a start. I feel strongly about helping kids, if they need a job — giving them the opportunity to make money for college. Or, giving them experience on a boat or in the shop. It is a wonder to give somebody the opportunity to start. ○

'For me, volunteerism is a full-time job — one on which I spend easily eight hours a day and am committed to in the context of a Ceasar Chavez quote: 'People who seek peaceful and meaningful change are not perplexed by long struggles.'

— Susan Clark, lobbyist
Juneau

JOURNAL

Aurora Hovland:

'we can learn and live a normal life'

Cultural exchange is Aurora Hovland's major passion these days — and to accomplish it she says she needs only to bring Anchorage's cultural diversity to the forefront.

So the 45-year-old immigrant from the Philippines has worked to swirl the mixture of ethnic mixes in Anchorage — through the Filipino Community Club, the American Association for University Women's United Nations Day celebration, and the school district's bilingual education program.

"I like to help provide an opportunity for people to reclaim their heritage and show it off a bit," she says.

Hovland came to Alaska with her husband in 1970. Born in the Philippines in 1937, she had left her homeland in 1962 on a European scholarship to study agronomy in Italy. She pursued her education in Spain and finally completed a doctorate in crop physiology in the United States. She also managed to travel around the world twice. A firm believer in staying single until you are well-traveled and well educated, she did not meet and marry her husband until she was 35.

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Can you tell me about your childhood in the Philippines?

Economics were a problem for us; I was one of 12 children and my father was only a teacher. Today, I live in luxury compared to my childhood.

I grew up right before World War II. Let's take Lebanon today to illustrate what I want to say. We hear about poverty and starvation, but Americans do not have to go hungry; they do not have to run for their lives or fear how to escape all the time.

The fear we had when the Japanese would come through the barrios was intense. My mother — we are five girls, and I was only 6 years old — would guard us like hens. People here in America don't realize how fortunate they are to fight wars outside of the U.S.

It is terrible to fear for your life. Just the plain fear of running to hide, the idea of someone chasing you, is traumatic and still bothers me sometimes. We had dugouts to hide in; you would hear sirens and we would go under the house because you never knew who was coming. The punishment given to youngsters, the torture used to make people talk, it was terrible.

The only torture I ever experienced was called the sauna. At high noon, in the tropics, the soldiers would come and want to search your house. You had to stand outside in tropical heat until they finished.

But I do not consider this to be a major factor in my life. I left the country before martial law and have lived in other countries pretty much ever since.

How do you integrate your cultural heritage into your life today in Anchorage?

I work in the community with various cultural clubs. And I am fortunate to sit on the parent's advisory committee for the bilingual education program for the school district.

You know, language, and I am speaking as an immigrant here, is not really as big a deal as people make it out to be. We can learn and live a normal life. I have contributed in the community and proven that we can do things together. Look at my work with the U.N. program.

In Anchorage, we have to promote our own culture. It is a striving for self-identity. We, Anchorage, are a mixture of cultures. Each one of us is saying we don't want to forget our background. I help provide opportunity for people to reclaim their heritage. ○

'I don't approve of using abortion as birth control, but I think it is an important option. What gets me is those guys who vote down money for day care centers and health care for poor pregnant women, but also want to abolish abortion.'

— Beverly Dunham, editor and publisher, Seward Phoenix-Log
Seward

JOURNAL

Photo courtesy of Ruth Burnett

Ruth Burnett is the former mayor of Fairbanks.

Dear Young Women:

I am pleased that you are considering running for public office, and I hope that any advice that I offer will be of value to you.

The primary reason anyone should have for running is to serve their fellow humans. This may sound like overworked political rhetoric; however, I sincerely believe too many candidates have lost that motive.

Women in their traditional roles as wives, mothers and homemakers, are conditioned for "public service." This role does not exclude the varied career choices that supply a foundation for policy-making, such as business, law, etc. Your style or public image is personal, but the basics for dealing with the public business should be honesty, integrity and dedication to the public purpose.

We are all familiar with goal-setting, but as a successful policymaker, you must be able to determine what your constituents feel is important in the future.

I realize this is brief, and I'm sure we could spend hours discussing the details of many specific items. However, these are some of the priorities that I feel candidates should consider when running for office. I wish you success in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

— Ruth E. Burnett

'I was a woman and I had pigment in my skin. They threatened me. I would be politically dead, they said, if I didn't go along with the system.'

— Blanche McSmith, businesswoman and former legislator
Juneau

JOURNAL

Photo by Ginna Brelsford

'We are able to forgive others, to see when they need time to refill; now we must learn to be that respectful and that gentle with ourselves. I think we are strong enough not to have to pretend to be strong, and loving enough not to have to pretend to be loving.'

— Kay Reese, teacher, homemaker
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Donna Morris:

'parity in pay really changed my life'

Donna Morris is, first and foremost, a union woman.

Long ago she saw her immigrant grandmother in the cleaning women's union in New York City. Then she saw her mother fight for equal pay and treatment without a union in the right-to-work state of Florida. When she moved to Alaska in 1977, she took a union job without hesitation at an Anchorage printing firm — and became one of just three women in the country operating a press under the International Printing Pressmen and Assistant's Union.

She is today a union activist in Anchorage, a member of the executive board of the union's Western States Conference, a single parent, feminist, graphic artist and representative of the printer's craft.

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Why are you a member of a union?

I come from a working-class background. My grandparents were peasants, my mother's family was Polish and my father's Italian.

My grandmother came to this country indentured at the age of 13 in 1912. She came here with her father signing a note saying that when she could work, whatever little wages she had went home to the family. She worked from the time she was 14 till she was 18 for nothing. She married a Polish man from her village in Jersey City and they moved back to Poland. She took being a Polish woman for about three years and said, 'forget it!' and returned to the States.

She worked as a cleaning woman in New York City, washing steps and stores and such. She belonged to the cleaning women's union. She really believed that the only reason she got retirement and benefits so that she would be taken care of if she fell down and broke her leg was because she belonged to a union. She always told us, no management person ever comes out and says, 'You look like you don't feel well; why don't you take the day off?' So, it was through unions that she had anything at all.

How did that affect you?

It made me very pro-union. And then when we moved to Florida and I was 15, my mother went to work. Florida is a right-to-work state, which means that women never make much money. Mom was working for the same company for over 27 years and the men that she trained got paid more than she did. I always felt that a union is the only way out of that kind of a Southern philosophy that unions are commies; that feeling is so prevalent in the South.

I saw my mother as a victim of that ideology. When I was married, my husband was in the construction union. He is an ironworker. If it wasn't for the union, the construction workers would have nothing. They get maimed, they have to work under all kinds of unsafe conditions, and they have little compensation. Naturally, when I came to Alaska and an opportunity opened up to go work at a union print shop, I jumped at it.

Our union, the International Printing Pressmen and Assistant's Union, is "parity." We don't have any job classifications that get paid more than another job classification. The only thing that distinguishes people is your experience.

That really changed my life, having parity in pay. You come from a different bargaining position when you are making money. Or when you come home, it changes the way you look at yourself.

(Without it), you are only making $3 an hour, and after all your job is not →

'I often wondered what it was like before the Russians came. What were the children's names? What were their songs? Now they are all things of the past.'

— Lillie McGarvey, president of Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization
Unalaska

JOURNAL

really all that important because look how little you get paid . . . (With it), no more of that stuff.

You come back into the house and say, 'Look, I am working hard and this is how much I make.' It changes you, changes the way you look at yourself and changes the options you have in your life. I have seen that happen in almost every married woman I know that has moved to Alaska and gone out and gotten a job. Her self-image increases as she begins to make money.

In the unions, when women start making the same amount of money as men, they start changing their self-image, then they start expecting respect. It upsets things, for the better.

How does your union address the specific needs of women?

Our union's international policy is no sexist language in the contracts. I am on the executive board of the Western States Conference of the international. At the conferences, all the international members know that women are either going to make or break the unions in the years to come. So, they make an effort to organize women. But women are the hardest people to organize; they have such a low opinion of themselves that they feel like this is the only job I can get.

How does that affect Alaska?

It made a difference when we tried to organize a shop here in Anchorage. It was women there who were being grossly underpaid and yet, they felt they had the most to lose. Management showed films on unions during our drive. The film always had the poor oppressed woman working and she was usually Southern and the person who set her straight as to what her rights really were was always a white male with a three-piece suit on. The poor woman would innocently talk about, 'Oh, do I have to attend these meetings and what is the union all about?' The women who were intimidated by the film swung the vote, towards management.

In your opinion, why are unions so commonly portrayed as communist?

I tend to blame everything on middle management. There was a time when the workers knew they needed management and management knew they needed workers, so they communicated. Along comes middle management and they cut the system of communication. They have to justify their existence because there really is no need for so many middle management people; they make it a bigger adversary situation than ever. No one trusts anyone anymore and management is convinced the union is out to screw them. And, the union thinks the same thing of management.

That is not true; union workers want the company to make money because then they will have a job. The workers' dream in the United States is unlike the French workers' dream, who want to take over the factory. In the U.S., the workers' dream is to make enough money to never have to work again. That is why the working class in the U.S. is never going to be part of a communist revolution. It is too intent on gathering things up and retiring.

How have you helped break down the stereotypical image of a woman in the union?

When I went out to the last international conference I realized two things: the men either think you are a radical feminist lesbian or are there for a good time. I present neither; I am there to do business. I am a mother of two children and I am heterosexual. That corners men and makes them re-think their own images of what a union woman is. If she isn't a housewife, a lesbian, or a sex object, what is she?

'. . . the international members know that women are either going to make or break the unions in the years to come. So, they make an effort to organize women. But women are the hardest people to organize; they have such a low opinion of themselves that they feel like this is the only job I can get.'

Do you advocate a woman getting inside of a union and trying to fight for her rights via that system or staying outside of that power structure and working in the large of society?

I recommend getting into a union. It may not be the best alternative and sexism is certainly there, but without the bargaining power of a union, women are shafted three times over.

How do you go about changing the union? You are a feminist; you need your job; you go into a union and are treated poorly.

You can't play by their rules or you get burned. If you don't play by their rules it is OK. But as soon as you do, you are in trouble. For example, if a man is going to a conference, it is OK for him to go to a party and pick up whomever. If you go and do the same thing, you are a cheap woman. It is a fact that if you want to get somewhere, you can't mix sexuality with your work.

If you do your work and take pride in it, acceptance comes. A woman cannot revert to being coy or relying on sexuality if she wants to be taken seriously. Women have to stand on their own two feet. When you start falling back into asking for help, you are only keeping yourself back along with other women. You have to take responsibility for this and for yourself. ○

'The library and the room you go into is the most wonderful room in the whole world, no matter what your interest is.'

— Susan English, postmaster, librarian, storekeeper
Seldovia

JOURNAL

Fran Tate: *'all the crazy ideas'*

A Mexican restaurant in Barrow? No one believed I could do it and that is why I did.

Fran Tate-Ramirez couldn't attract much help for her plan to build a Mexican restaurant in an Eskimo community far north of the arctic circle. Nobody would give her a loan, so she sold everything, including her Seattle home, and went to work herself.

She started a water hauling business, then expanded into the "Elephant Pot Sewage Hauling" business. Finally she got together the money to open "Pepe's North-of-the-Border Mexican Food" restaurant in October of 1978.

Born in 1929, the former secretary and electrical engineer moved to Barrow in 1972. She's been working for the community ever since.

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I am a crazy lady with a lot of guts. I believe that if you seek excellence, it takes guts; I have more guts than brains, so I do crazy things. Barrow is wonderful. I just love it, I can exercise all the crazy ideas I have right here.

You want me to toot my own horn and I won't, 'cuz the things I have already done here don't hold a candle to what I intend to do!

I believe in combining fun with service to my customers. I put everything I earn here right back into the community. I cater to local people because they are gonna be here long after the whites leave."

Before I was here, families didn't have anywhere to dine out. Now they do, because I make prices that fit; I keep it down as much as possible, because I want the locals to come here.

Mexican food shocks everyone, and it's fun to see people react. We're at the Top of the World Hotel, and the decor is only to be matched by Mexican restaurants in Los Angeles.

I gave McDonald's their chance in 1975. I wrote them and asked them to put the golden arches in Barrow. They said it was a great idea, but they didn't go into places with less than 50,000 people. I remembered that I had worked nights in a Mexican restaurant in Seattle when I worked as a draftsperson there. I called up my old boss and asked him how he did it, and he told me how.

I encourage the kids to come in, to be waited on, to realize that they deserve respect and service and to help teach them manners. I know they are torn between two worlds, and this way they are learning to grow with the community.

I go into the schools for career day and talk to the kids about owning a restaurant, about becoming a chef. I see that they feel great when I cater to them. They feel important, and they are.

I also have a contract to feed some of the senior citizens. You see, I like it here and I like serving the community.

My personal satisfaction comes from doing things: the restaurant, the other services and the zany ideas — like dressing up as the Easter bunny on Easter and going around town giving out candy. I pay for it all. It is my own project. I just love doing it.

I could hang all kinds of awards up here in the restaurant; I choose to hang up pictures of the kids in the community with the Easter bunny. That is what is important; that is what means something to this community. ❍

Photo by Fran Durner

'We can't go back, while we can't we must be what we are; it is a dilemma — how to feel strong, good about who we are, in the midst of chaos.'

— Emma Widmark, Grand Camp president, Alaska Native Sisterhood
Juneau

JOURNAL

Alice Wardlow: 'a sense of empowerment'

Beneath Alice Wardlow's shy smile is a woman who talks knowingly and forcefully about unequal power and violence in human relationships.

Alice Wardlow was born in 1945 in Bethel and lives there today. She works with domestic violence, as outreach coordinator for the Tundra Women's Coalition, and education, as a member of the school advisory board.

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For years, I sat back and passively listened. Today I like to pass on my life experiences.

I got involved with violence issues because my mother was a battered woman for 30 years. She died as a result of the situation.

I went through it myself for a couple of years and got out of the situation. When I returned to Bethel, I volunteered for the Tundra Women's Coalition for three years before I became the outreach coordinator .

My main emphasis is to encourage women in relationships to gain more control in their lives. Violence is really an unequal relationship; it is power over someone or something. In order to transform that situation, women must regain a sense of empowerment in their lives.

There is a lot of talk about returning to traditional values and respect for the elders.

I think both young women and young men should learn basic survival skills and that includes learning how to cook and both partners doing the task of 'housewife.' I have the greatest respect for the elders. And their system worked years ago. They worked as partners. But times have changed and I think we need to learn to do the same with it. The concept of partnership is the same, it just means that both men and women learn how to share in the household chores today. ◑

Lois Irvin: 'to repay, to keep the ball of giving rolling'

Lois Irvin was 53 when she came to Alaska the first time, to visit relatives in Homer. A year later she returned for good to make Homer her home, to take an adventurous turn, to begin new involvements. And after a decade, she has become a stalwart in the community.

Irvin has multiple sclerosis (M.S.), a disease that comes and goes. It puts its victims in a wheelchair one day without warning, and just as mischievously lends them their freedom again the next. Irvin's M.S. is currently in remission and she is taking advantage of the mobility.

She was Homer's 1981 Citizen of the Year after serving in a variety of civic roles. She has worked for the legislature, acts as a local court watcher, serves on the local alcohol board, and was treasurer of the Homer Chamber of Commerce.

You see, I have M.S. A lot of the time there was no way I could do anything for myself. There was this strong sense of wanting to repay, well, to keep the ball of giving rolling.

I was diagnosed with M.S. in the early 1930s and confined to a wheelchair. The exquisite fatigue that accompanied my M.S. was totally obliterating. I remember that my faith was really important; there was this deep sense of somebody that I could turn to. I haven't lost sight of that but I've been leading a virtually normal life up here.

It has not been easy; there was a period in my life when I felt tested daily. My husband died very suddenly and two months later, my mother had a stroke in Washington. I look back and wonder how I really survived. I was just hanging on. I think a lot of it was living my life one day at a time, primarily hanging on.

After Mom died, I had some pretty tough decisions to make. You know, the old, 'What am I going to do with my life?' type. Most of my (extended) family was in Alaska, so I came to Alaska.

It was an awakening. I sure took the open route. It was, in a way, as if I were free, free to take chances — and I never was before. I can take my energy and give it to the community. ◑

'Older women need to get out more, take a walk or something. Loneliness and depression can ruin your health. Go to the library, get active in senior events. But don't sit around and get depressed.'

— Theresa Ripley, former teacher, active senior citizen
Sitka

JOURNAL

Mary Sanders: *'you share joys, sorrows and needs'*

Mary Sanders helped found a women's school in Anaktuvuk Pass, and later spent the winter in a tent in Nuiqsuit teaching and waiting for the "real" school to be built. Her flexibility and commitment come from a missionary ideal that one is on earth to do what is necessary — and villages all over northern Alaska have benefited by her contributions.

Mary Sanders came to Alaska in 1961 to teach high school in Anchorage. Then one summer she and a friend decided to volunteer their time to the Presbyterian church — and wound up living on St. Paul Island. A passion was born, and a curiosity to see other parts of Alaska while serving the church soon pushed her out of her traditional teaching job in Anchorage.

She developed a one-year proposal to redesign the church's Christian Education Program to be more relevant to the needs of the villages. One year turned to many more in the Bush villages of Alaska.

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Do any experiences stand out from your teaching years or missionary years in the Bush?

There was one year in Anaktuvuk Pass, known as the 'Year of Plenty.' That year the women of Anaktuvuk Pass came to me and asked me to teach them how to read and write English. For a year we held classes in my house a couple of times each week. I think the most exciting part of the experience was watching women all of a sudden be able to express themselves on forms or other necessary documents. One woman's final exam was to go to fill out a form all by herself! It was wonderful.

People considered it the year of plenty because of the initial scare the village had when the caribou did not arrive on time. People were hungry. In a most unexpected visit, thousands of caribou came and didn't pass through the village; they stayed for awhile. The fishing was great that year, there were suddenly plenty of sheep and ptarmigan. The village people said it was the best year ever — there was plenty of food and the women were learning how to read and write!

Then there was an overwhelming experience in Nuiqsuit. One Sunday, the minister couldn't make it out there for services, so he asked if I would be willing to go. I was living in Barrow at the time and decided I could do it. I went for a day and ended up staying nine due to weather.

After I returned to Barrow I received a request from the village people to return there to teach school. Nuiqsuit was redefined as a village under the Native Claims Settlement Act so they were just beginning to build up the village; people were living in tents. I didn't think I could live in a tent in the winter out there and teach school, so I hesitated. They then said they would try and find someone else and would I come for just awhile until they got their new teacher. I never saw a group of people who wanted a school more than those in Nuiqsuit. I agreed to go for six weeks or so.

To make a long story short, I stayed until the next May when school was out. There were seven teacher's aides; we taught in the tents and used state correspondence courses. It was really a time of sharing, of mutuality. I needed the village members to survive out there and they needed me to help teach school. You really get to know a group of people when you live together in those circumstances. You share joys, sorrows and needs.

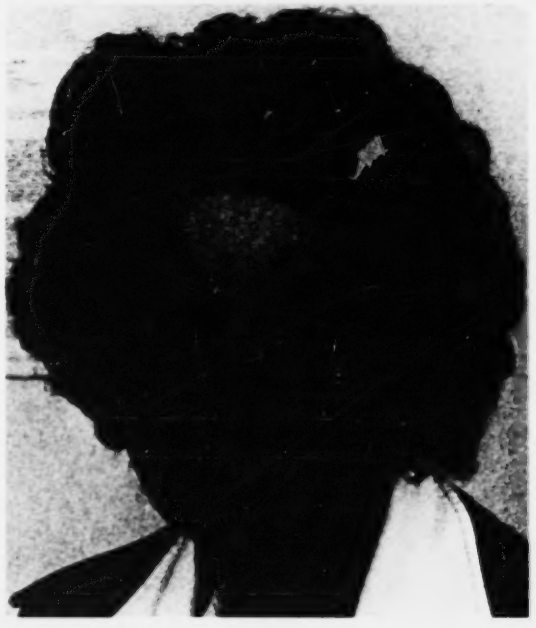
From there it was to Barrow, love and marriage. Today I am living in Homer. We are building a home and I have my own educational consulting business. I still travel a lot to the arctic region to help with teaching. I guess it gets in one's bones and I can't give it up!

'I open my ears when I go to village. I listen for young people who want to learn what us tribal doctors do. But young people don't ask much.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

JOURNAL

Donnis Thompson: Libertarian



Donnis Stark Thompson's political fortunes took an upturn in the summer of 1982 when she became the Libertarian Party nominee for lieutenant governor. She didn't win, but she helped the party attract enough votes to be ensured an automatic spot on future Alaska ballots.

Born in 1928 in Stockton, Illinois, this Republican-turned-Libertarian moved to Alaska in 1951, first stopping in Fairbanks and finally settling in the Kenai area. Her husband, Stan Thompson, is currently mayor of the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

I came to be a Libertarian with a great deal of difficulty. I worked hard as the committeewoman for the Republican Party for a number of years. In 1971, we sold our business and moved out to the homestead. I had a lot of time to read and study. I read things like 'Atlas Shrugged,' by Ayn Rand.

Between a lot of reading, I came to a real painful conclusion; one year someone said that there was not 10 cents' difference between the leading parties. So I began to look at the Libertarian Party.

My philosophy about government can be simplified by looking at two forms of government: one is statism. It can go by any name; it can be a monarchy, a dictatorship, a fascist state, a communist state . . . but what it says is that individuals are for the benefit of the state and we must fulfill our role to the state.

The other form of government is that the individual is prime and the state is subservient to the individual. . . . if none of us have the right to take a gun and rob someone, than neither do we have the right to delegate the right to a thing called the state. Today, our state can do that; if you don't believe it, try not paying your taxes. ◐

Clare Swan: 'this terrible thing'

"I have this terrible thing called commitment," says Clare Swan, chief of the Kenaitze Indian tribe. "My commitment to my people is like a disease, it is so strong."

There are some 508 certified Kenaitze Indians in Alaska, mostly on the Kenai Peninsula. "Kenaitze" is a Russian word, meaning roughly "people of the river." As chief of the tribe, Swan deals with everything from promoting cultural preservation and tribal activities to battling unemployment, racism and alcoholism.

Born in Kenai in 1939, she is part Filipino and part Kenaitze. She grew up in Kenai, lived in Anchorage and Seward until the 1964 earthquake, moved to Chicago for 12 years, then returned to the Kenai Peninsula.

The tribe to me, I feel like I am inside of an egg, and the shell is getting too small. I have been back here for two years and chief of the tribe for a year. The growing pangs are there, I am going to have to get a new skin because this one is not going to fit any more.

Questions to myself: Does the tribal council see, feel, hear me as a leader? Is it time to change? There are some real signs that we must decide; are we as a tribe going to just be left? And someone will come along and say, 'Oh is there a tribe here? Gee, I have lived here 30 years and I didn't know there was a tribe.'

You know, I lived in Chicago for quite awhile. I realized when I got back here that my culture was missing. I left here because I didn't want to see a whole place, an era, a people, dying. I missed two cultures, the layers of culture in the area. I came back and realized that we had been submerged and that did not feel good to me, so I got active. ◐

'The life of an immigrant woman was not so easy to get involved in government, in the community. You only feel like you are half a person, like you have something to make up.'

— Magnhild Lee, Norwegian immigrant
Petersburg

JOURNAL

Always keep in mind that you are original. Be proud of your sex and of whatever racial identity you happen to be linked with. Never allow either to affect your dreams or what you want to do with your life.

My first inspiration came from my parents. In my early childhood, there was no canned amusement to take the place of parents. They read to me, supervised my memorizing of beautiful poems and sayings and taught my sisters and me to entertain ourselves through books.

My next inspiration came from my primary teachers, who were New England missionaries dedicating their lives to the education of black girls in Montgomery. Their philosophy will always follow me that people are all equal and that God loves us all equally and made us for a special purpose.

My high school inspiration came from Albertine Moore Campbell, my English teacher, who was a female graduate of Fisk University and kept my dream alive of pursuing my college education there, a dream that had been also nourished by my parents and my early primary teachers.

My idea of being an attorney possibly was generated from reading the life story of Lincoln, but it was a dream I didn't talk about very much because as I recall, I had graduated from college before I ever saw a woman lawyer — although I knew that there was nothing to prevent me from becoming one.

In college, my greatest inspiration came from James Weldon Johnson, author of the National Negro Anthem, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," "Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man," and numerous other writings. His creative literature class, of course, inspired me to write, but the fact that he was trained as a lawyer also inspired me.

Being involved in the community, I was taught, was a personal responsibility of everyone and that each of us had a responsibility to, through our special efforts, make the community a little better place to live.

Living in Alabama, a completely segregated state in the '20s, '30s and '40s, required much drive and overcoming of many handicaps. The struggle of the black population was to overcome these handicaps and acquire, against odds, the things in other states which your own state deprived you of.

To work through these barriers and become Alabama's first black woman attorney in 1948, perhaps had an impact on state and national affairs, but in another sense, was an indictment of the system under which we lived. There were numerous black female schoolteachers in the state and throughout the South. I had at first joined the ranks of those numerous teachers, who worked for approximately one-third the salary of white teachers in the state.

The types of cases that possibly hit me harder, being a black woman and mother, than would have hit the average attorney were those involving peonage and the restraint of black men, women and children in forced labor on plantations in Alabama. Becoming Alaska's first black practicing attorney and first black female attorney may have had an impact on state and national affairs to the extent of at least improving the face of things.

Any oppression of any nature is probably more likely to be noticed by a woman, since women have had their very special type of oppression throughout history. Whether or not the oppressed was black or female did not really restrain my activities in assisting, as even when it was the federal government or the State of Alaska, I had no choice except to pitch in and fight.

Since women are more likely to respond to reactions of oppression and things which inflict pain, police brutality has been one of my major concerns throughout my life. In the Deep South, I became aware of the way in which minorities were abused by police. I realize, however, that minorities are not the only ones, but they are more likely to be abused. I have always felt a special responsibility to answer the calls of persons who have been victims of this type of cruelty. I will never hesitate to speak out against any evil which I am aware of and have the opportunity to speak out against, and I feel that young women should all do so.

There is so much to be done and, to use the common expression, one often feels like a voice in the wilderness. However, by affiliating with organizations that stand for the things you believe in, that voice may be a little stronger. There may be those who will take up the cry and carry it on from generation to generation and as the years go by, the effect may be felt in the community and the state, the nation, and possibly the world.

Medical technology is advancing rapidly. We all can envision a world without disease but unless we, as women, work not only on the physical sides of our world but on its social aspects, it will be longer, much longer, before we even get a glimmer of a world without bigotry, oppression and war.

— Mahala Askley Dickerson

Mahala Ashley Dickerson was the first black female attorney in both Alabama and Alaska. She is a close friend of Rosa Parks, the black woman who in 1955 became a symbol for the civil rights movement by refusing to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus.

'Be happy to help.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

JOURNAL

Photo by Rob Stapleton

'A part of involvement is always hard work, a balancing of equities and difficult decisions. There are no simple answers — things don't come and doors don't open simply because you wish them to.'

— Arliss Sturgulewski, state senator
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Annie Brower:

'sharing is important'

Annie Brower takes politics and education seriously — because she sees success in both as crucial to the future of her people, and because she has seen too many instances where achievements in them are only illusory.

She was born on Barter Island in 1925 and reared from age 4 in Barrow. She never finished high school herself, but she saw the effects of a school system that moved students from grade to grade without actual educational achievement. So she began fighting the practice of "social promotion" and wound up battling multi-national oil companies and developers in the arctic.

Her son, Eugene Brower, is mayor of Barrow.

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I am not afraid to stand up and speak my mind. When they (oil companies) come in here and want to develop, I say let's have some planning and look at the effects of development.

How have you addressed planning and development in Barrow?

Well, I have been involved with the planning commission. We try and make sure the developers and oil companies comply with the regulations. They have to inform us of what they are planning to do in our region because it is our Native land and we claim that area, and we can't just be trampled all over. We put stipulations on permits. Mostly, we try to get them to comply to the environmental issues and the game situation.

Photo by Fran Durner

'One of my favorite quotes is: 'God's gift to you is life; what you make out of your life is your gift to God.'

— Fran Tate, restaurateur and businesswoman
Barrow

JOURNAL

Are you against development?

I am against the way things are handled now. I often think the developers don't think about our way of living, with subsistence and all. We may buy food from the store but when we run out of money we hunt. Because I care about what happens here, I am involved with the planning. I like standing up to the oil companies and saying, 'Hey, take it easy.'

Sometimes I tell the oil companies at meetings that I don't know what they are after. Our land is full of oil rigs and service stations and there are lease sales scheduled for the ocean for years to come and that really scares me. We depend on the ocean for our food, we depend on the whales for subsistence. One time at a meeting, I said that I thought one way of getting our message across would be to go to Washington D.C. and throw gallons of oil on the White House lawn. Maybe that would get people's attention.

I know that you are also very involved with the educational system, can you elaborate?

I was born on Barter Island and grew up in Barrow. I did not learn English until later on and never finished my schooling. This probably had something to do with my interest. Mostly it came from working around kids that were supposed to be educated. I could see that they weren't.

One day I was working with a high school graduate who couldn't read the scales. I was appalled and began observing the schools and the students. I realized that there was a lot of social promotion going on; promoting students to the next grade even if they were not passing the previous grades. I think that ruined a lot of the kids. With time my eyes were finally opened, and I felt that it was too late, but we did try and make some improvements.

We have a long way to go. My own personal goal is to see a better education system for our children. First we lost the kids to schools far away because we didn't have ones here. That was terrible. The first two years you could still recognize your children. After that, forget it; they were someone else's.

'First we lost the kids to schools far away because we didn't have ones here. That was terrible. The first two years you could still recognize your children. After that, forget it; they were someone else's.'

Today, I teach the Inupiat language and culture to the kids. The school district tried to give me a classroom certificate and I objected. I said, all these years I have been fighting social promotion and I will not take an unearned teacher's certificate. So, I decided to go earn it.

I went to college with my daughter one time in Fairbanks to earn credentials. 'Imagine that,' I told her, 'I never finished grade school and I never went to high school but I am going to college.' We lost a family member so I had to return to Barrow.

What is your view on young women and the effects of change on them?

You know I have seen all this transition from way back. The effects are not so good for the young girls.

If young women are going to be involved in politics, I think they should really study hard the law. If you want to accomplish things, you have to know law. Without an understanding of the legal system, you are at a real disadvantage.

If you are going to be a mother, as a young woman, you must start by raising your children with love. You must show them that you care about them, and want the very best for them.

Today, you see the kids are not disciplined; we must restore this. Teach them to be disciplined. I don't believe in beating the children, either; that's not what I am talking about. Talk to them sternly, let them know why you are upset.

You know, it used to be that the most honorable thing for a woman was to be the wife of a whaling captain. It is tradition that if your crew catches a whale, the whaling captain's wife had to go out on the ice. Everyone works together, comes back and celebrates together. Sharing is a big part of the catch. You know, my husband and I don't agree on everything, but we agree that sharing is important. Some women are allowed to go hunt whales. When I was a little girl, my father taught me how to hunt. But my husband didn't want me to do this.

My grandfather was quite a whaler. He never missed catching a whale every spring and helped to feed the town of Barrow. He was a good hunter, too; he shared everything he got. Eskimos believe in sharing; people that don't like to share have a hard time here. Especially when you are subsistence living, the people who share become very well known and respected and the people who don't want to share, they have nothing to do with them.

There are women whalers. My grandma told me that I was named after an aunt who was a good whaler. And, before I married my husband, Harry Brower, Sr., told me that I came from a good whaling family. My grandma told me that because Brower, Jr., married me and my ancesters were good whalers, that I bring good luck.

I learned about sharing from my mother and my grandmother. I am always concerned with people who need things. When somebody needs something, I just give it. My kids are like that, too, you know. I am proud of that. I love sharing food with the senior citizens. We give fresh meat and go and bring fish and meat to people who can't get it for themselves.

You know I have four girls, five boys and 22 grandchildren; that is a lot of sharing!

'Us Native women have been liberated a long time.Sometimes I want the women from New York who got ordained and want equality to come to Alaska and cut wood and carry water and try and survive in a bad season. That is what we do and I don't like it.'

— Ana Frank, health aide, Episcopal deacon
Minto and Fairbanks

JOURNAL

Kay Brown:

'I worked to create opportunities'

By the time she was 31, Kay Brown was one of Alaska's most influential state policymakers.

As the first female director of the state's Division of Minerals and Energy Management, she directed a 72-person team responsible for energy-related decisions with local, national and international consequence — and was one of the youngest division chiefs in Alaska's bureaucracy after a swift rise to power.

Kay Brown was born, raised and educated in Texas. She came to Alaska in 1976 as a reporter after working in Georgia reporting on the state legislature. With a background in journalism, she is a generalist with the ability to write well and to organize, synthesize and analyze data. Her skills are grounded in a strong belief in herself and a willingness to fight to prove her capabilities.

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How did you get to the top so fast?

I work hard, almost compulsively. I still believe a woman has to work harder than a man to make it. I make things happen. I set out to get this job: I lobbied for it. I took advantage of opportunities. When someone handed me a task that seemed like drudgery, I took it on as a challenge, proved that I was capable and competent.

Are the decisions of your job more factual and less political?

All work is politics, in a sense. If you want to get ahead, you've got to play politics. The essence of politics is working with people until there is a compromise reached. A good administrator will walk people through a problem: what are the alternatives and the effects?

One political part of the job is trying to gauge the effects of a decision on people in the community. The public is paying our salaries; that's who we're working for, and I think we have to be concerned about what they think.

Experiences with change?

Before I worked for the government, I was a journalist. As a journalist you are not allowed to advocate; you are there to record, observe, and if you are good, get underneath a situation and inform the public. I don't think I was able to change very much there; that is probably one of the things that got me moving and changing directions. I didn't see any long-term opportunities for change there. I saw things that were prohibiting me to be more political and take stands.

Like feminism: the whole time I was a journalist, I did not identify with feminism. I was sympathetic, but not up-front; I really valued people thinking I was objective. I had a lot of opinions but I kept them to myself.

What motivates you to work so hard?

I don't know. I sense that it is different than how most people are. I have come to accept that in other people.

In part, I felt that I was behind when I started this job; I wasn't an engineer, I didn't have a technical background. So, I worked hard to be competent. Partly it is because I enjoy the satisfaction of accomplishing things and advancing ideas that matter to me. Partly it is because I am driven. I don't understand it.

My father was a strong influence on me. He encouraged me to do a lot of things. He paid for me to take modeling in high school, he insisted that I go to college.

Any advice for younger women?

There are some basic questions you have to ask yourself: How hard are you willing to work? Are you willing to sacrifice other things? Assess your talents and your ambitions. Be honest with yourself. If you want to do it you can do it, but you must be focused about your goals.

Another important thing is to seek out people who can help you. Adopt a mentor, or several if possible. Determine what skills are needed to hold the job you want and then set out to acquire those skills. Pursue your goals within the context of long-range plans: 'Where do I want to be in the next five years?'

I remember when I was on staff and I thought, 'I would like to be the boss; how can I get there?' I worked to create an opportunity and I was in the right place at the right time. I was prepared to take advantage of opportunities that came along. ○

'If you leave yourself open, the right things will happen. Those things that are meant for you will come to you; it is a process of unfolding.'

— JeanMarie Crumb, community relations, Anchorage School Dist. Anchorage

JOURNAL

Marge Brittain: *'we do it'*

Marge Brittain's ladies' sewing club brought local government to Kenny Lake.

The sewing club had been a community tradition: every two weeks women in the area — located between Chitna and Copper Center — would gather to sew and discuss local events. Discussions that began with families invariably turned to the community: the need for a school, the need for a voting precinct, the need to be recognized in the census count.

Before long, the sewing turned to scheming — the club became the Kenny Lake League, a civic self-help organization for both women and men interested in developing the community.

Marge Brittain was one of the first members of the sewing club, and today she heads the Kenny Lake League that emerged from it. The job touches everything from schools and roads to the local community center; in 1982, Marge added electoral politics to her repertoire by running the state House campaign of a neighbor.

She was born in 1929 in Minnesota and grew up during the Great Depression. That meant living in 29 states in 17 years and watching her father lose his farm twice. "My dad was not the kind of man who felt that women should be educated," she says, "so I married early, at 17."

The Brittain family came to Alaska in 1959 hoping to find "high wages and free land," but what they found was nearly the opposite. Finally they discovered the Kenny Lake area. Marge took the two children there to begin homesteading — without running water, electricity or telephone — while husband Roy worked 1½ years in Anchorage and sent money and supplies out to them. More than two decades later, the Brittains are at the center of a do-it-yourself community that makes independence an ethic.

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I believe very stongly that a person should work for what he gets. You make your luck and the harder you work, the luckier you get. I do not believe in food stamps. As children, we had it hard. We always felt we would take care of our own.

The Republican Party used to mean, you stand on your own two feet, do your own work and make your own way.

I learned that I am not dumb by running an election campaign. I learned that I am capable.

I think all the husbands used to wonder what we talked about. When we decided to apply for monies to build the community center, they learned. That was a community effort. We even turned back some of the money. Why? Because both men and women in the community joined forces to build something that everyone could benefit from; people donated their time and services. Today, we have fairs, we have holiday gatherings, we have politics and we have fun!

It is all for the community. When something needs to be accomplished, we do it.

Florence Bell: *'a lot of support'*

Florence Bell arrived by steamship in 1946 in the Southeast Alaska community of Kake — and stayed in the area long enough to help deliver some 107 babies. A public health nurse, she came from her native Maine to serve the medical needs of Kake, Angoon and Hydaburg. She found a husband, a small business and plenty of medical experiences in Southeast Alaska. She is now retired, living in Petersburg, and active in local politics, senior events and the Episcopal church.

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How has the advent of medical technology influenced midwifery in the villages?

Well, long before the LaMaze method, the old Indian ladies used to help out the woman in labor. There was a lot of company, they all came and sat around giving support. They drank a lot of coffee. When the time was right, they would tell the woman when to push and how to breathe.

There is cultural shock around birthing. If you had grown up in Kake, you would deliver with a midwife just the way your mother and grandmother did. But now, your daughter growing up, she is in an era where they send the mother out to a hospital, Mt. Edgecumbe.

The whole thought is they (health officials) are horrified that the women are going to stay in the village. But it is a distinct cultural shock. A great deal of the woman's support system is now removed from her during birthing.

What is your most memorable memory of so much nursing?

Giving artificial respiration to a baby bear and shots to a wolf on a hot August day!

'My quest for knowledge is my respect for knowledge, is the basis of my teaching.'

— Mary Sanders, teacher
Homer

JOURNAL

Dorothy Clifton: *'Archives Alive'*

Archives are usually old documents and books which are hidden away in dusty places and rarely used. Here at the research center we want to bring documents to life, make history live for people by telling it through films, slide shows and displays.

Archives Alive is Dorothy Clifton's Valdez historical project and research center. She also works to build understanding — of Alaska society, of community problems, of the good and bad effects of development in Valdez. Clifton has served as magistrate for Valdez, created a "safe home" for battered women, and is on the board of directors of Advocates For Victims of Violence.

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All too often, the loneliness leads to more. I know one lady who tells me, 'Oh, I just love that peppermint schnapps,' or 'I just love that kahlua.' Just a little nip occasionally becomes a full-blown alcoholic or it is the candy or popcorn or something to take away the pain.

The women's movement? I don't get bothered about it. I mean I don't get all shook up if someone wants their name hyphenated or somebody doesn't, or no bras, it just doesn't bother me. I think it has helped a lot of people. I have always been such an individual that I don't understand when someone says 'I don't know if I can do it, I will have to ask my husband.' Oh, baloney! I've never had problems that way because I never let it get that way. ○

Susy Collins: *'there was a clash of wills'*

Susy Collins of Valdez remembers more than a few late nights spent deciding how to cope with a small town turning into the bustling terminus of the trans-Alaska pipeline.

Collins served on the Valdez City Council from 1976 to 1980, becoming one of the architects of Valdez' response to the challenge of rapid development.

Born in 1940 in South Dakota, she moved with her family to Fairbanks in 1958. In 1974 she and her husband and two children moved to Valdez. Today Collins is head of a foreign students' exchange program in Valdez, president of the Valdez Arts Council, and a member of the Gold Rush planning committee. She recently became mayor of Valdez.

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. . . There was an enormous lot of people in town and there was a clash of wills between the local people who didn't know what to expect and all the new people in town.

I substitute taught during those days. I guess the people that I saw most frequently were the kids. It was terribly sad to me to see kids who were shunned because they smelled mildewy. People had no idea that you couldn't come up here and park a trailer; it would freeze solid or the wind would tip it over, so these kids hadn't had a bath, they didn't have their clothes washed.

Some of these people came and it was the chance of a lifetime, you know, they could make a fortune and they wanted to live as inexpensively as possible. Families of six, eight were crammed into little trailers. Dads working, moms working, if she could at all, and the kids were just, well there wasn't much they could do. It was sad, probably the most sad part.

The other part was tremendously exciting. People came here who were the best in their field to build the pipeline. It was amazing, an amazing event. I probably met people then, who gathered from all over the world, that I would never have had the opportunity to meet without doing an enormous amount of traveling. That was exciting.

There is a third part; it has to do with the effects of all of this. I do tours in the summer for the cruise ship people. Three or four years ago when it was young, and no one was real sure what would happen, there were many people, particularly the environmentalists, who were sure the oil was going to leak all over and Alaska was going to die. I got a lot of, 'What are you doing to this place? That was the nature of questions three years ago. Now, I am getting a lot of people saying, 'It really does work doesn't it; isn't it a miracle to see it?' ○

'I believe in women's networking. I would never have survived without it.'

— P.J. Gentry, day care teacher
Cordova

JOURNAL

Maxine Brittell:

'we are all just an accident away'

Caring for two handicapped children turned Maxine Brittell of Sitka into a champion for the cause of handicapped Alaskans.

Her son Bart, now 42, suffered brain damage at age 7 in a serious bout with measles when the family lived in the isolated Prince William Sound village of Tatitlek. He later contracted polio and suffered further damage. "He is now brilliant in some things," she says, "and poor in others."

Her daughter Linda, now 39, was born with congenital heart disease requiring extensive surgery and treatment. To compound the family's tragedy, Linda's son was born with cerebral palsy and her husband killed in a freak accident.

Coping with such cruel fate has meant endless medical attention and expense, a sense of inspiration through instances of hope and help, and a lifelong crusade to improve conditions and understanding for the handicapped. "There have been a lot of friends along the way," Maxine says.

A retired 32-year federal government employee, Maxine was Sitka coordinator for the 1981 International Year of Disabled Persons, and is a member of the Governor's Committee for Employment of the Handicapped.

* * *

The most difficult thing for a handicapped person is employment. It is difficult to face the fact that the public has a hard time realizing that they are real people; they have many capabilities that may not be at all related to their handicap. They need the public to be aware and accept them as a person.

I often felt, when we were living in the village of Tatitlik, and Bart had measles, 'What might it have been like if we lived where there was medical help?' But when I worked in Seattle, one of the vice presidents had a daughter with the same thing and she had the very best medical care and her damage was worse than my son's. I think that was a comforting experience. Maybe, I said, I can quit blaming myself. It has taken a degree of guilt away.

Another joy from the work comes from looking at Linda. . . . I think seeing her go on to make a whole life for herself made me feel that somewhere along the way I did something right because she was able to accept herself the way she is, and she is a very valuable member of society and a wonderful mother.

Who knows; we are all just an accident away from being in the same boat. Being a part of and seeing here in Sitka how much special education services are growing and developing — many other handicapped children won't have to leave the state to get the attention they deserve. ○

'In our life before, we have nothing, all kinds of nothing.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

JOURNAL

Ramona Kolenut just celebrated her 50th anniversary of teaching. She is now retired and living in Cordova.

An Open Letter to Young Women on Teaching:

My philosophy of teaching? Which one? The lofty, far-fetched ideals with which I entered the profession before I was old enough to vote — or the mellow, stabilized values I place upon education today? Or the development of changing priorities as I pursue post-retirement activities in the field — as I surely will?

Perhaps the answer is that one's philosophy must be tentative — subject to revision as new insights are gained.

Today's child is bombarded with mass media. Radio and TV make an adult of him. He or she will tune out that which is not in keeping with his or her interests. A teacher must alter her techniques to compete. Emphasis upon uniformity of learning must give way to variability in exposure to learning situations, with like variability expected in results. I have seen the pendulum swing. I have had to swing with it, altering my educational concepts to fit the need of the child at hand at the moment.

Yet, throughout the changing trends I still must cling to a few teaching principles which evolved during my initial teaching experience — the one-room school of 50 years ago. The need for emphasis upon individualized instruction has remained, transferable regardless of the teaching assignment or classroom load. I have never changed my attitude toward the high priority of establishing a positive self-image or continuing supportive reinforcement of a worthwhile self-concept in every child. I feel so strongly that what a person believes about himself establishes what he can and will do. The child who thinks well of himself can safely fail and try again.

A third view of teaching which I hold in high regard also evolves back to my first year of teaching. Each child must be helped to discover avenues by which he can help himself. He must learn through discovery. He must be encouraged to be a thinker.

Obviously, my teaching experiences subsequent to that all-important first year have supplemented my original views. I now realize the need to look for aptitudes — not always testable, sometimes hardly definable — that will strengthen and nurture a child's academic and vocational development and permit higher attainment in later life. He must always be guided to objectives realistically adjusted to his particular abilities.

My many years of teaching have helped me recognize the tremendous allies to be found in parents. I have found it worthwhile to seek their advice, respect their ideas and value their friendship.

In retrospect, I feel fortunate to have elected to follow the teaching profession. The faith of a small child, the gratitude of a parent, the sharing with fellow teachers, the finding for myself a niche in each community in which I have been privileged to work, the fulfillment of my personal potential. Know what? It's been wonderful!

— Ramona Kolenut

'Remember,in impacting government, one person can do it simply because 95 percent of the rest of the population doesn't even try to. You don't have to be sophisticated in your approach; just caring and commitment and perseverance is enough.'

— Susan Clark, lobbyist
Juneau

JOURNAL

Photo by Gina Bresford

'Today what I have to offer is how to dissect problems, how to reduce them to their core, how to find alternative solutions and how to summarize them. It makes me less doctrinaire and more analytical. I focus on issues, not parties.'

— Fran Ulmer, attorney
Juneau

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Susan English: *'an extension of your family'*

Susan English is as much a part of Seldovia as the rocky tidal cove that protrudes through the Kachemak Bay fishing community. The school is named for her, the library was founded by her, and four generations of Seldovians have been related to her.

She was born there in 1904, and has lived there most of her life. But her sense of belonging comes from involvement, not endurance. She was postmaster for 49 years, active with the school board and local health boards for some 40 years, and a volunteer in nearly every community project for five decades. She has an old-fashioned sense of community commitment that seems almost an anachronism today, but which has served Seldovia for Susan English's entire life.

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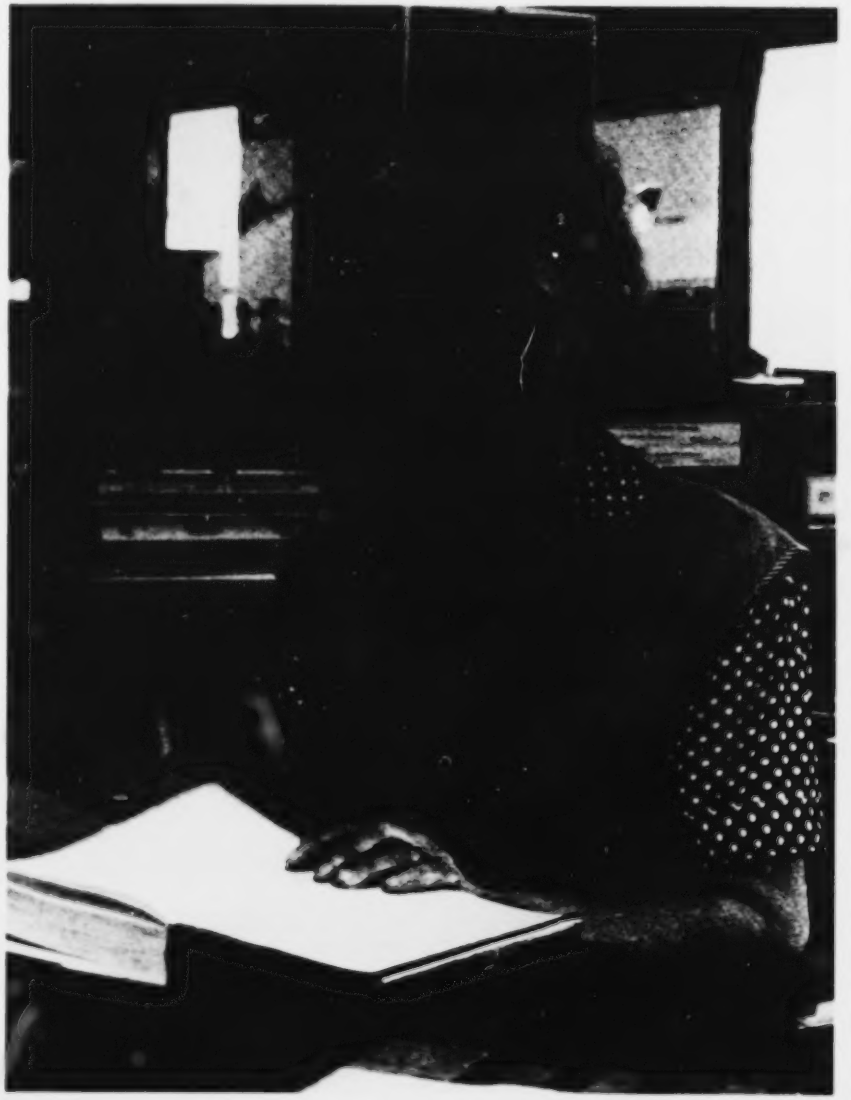

Could you tell me about some of your involvements in the community?

It seems like everything Seldovia was involved with had my name there someplace. The thing that I believe in the most was the library, the Seldovia Public Library. It has been the center of my love.

We organized the library in 1936. A lot of our projects, Seldovia had to do on its own. We didn't have the government grants then that we do today. I think volunteerism was important in the development of our library. All through the years, no one was ever paid for their services at the library or any other community project.

Even today, I still volunteer at the library. People tell me that I am too old and library work is too demanding. But I just enjoy it so much. I love the books, I love to get over there and do my own thing. It is a place for everyone. You are never too old or too young for the library.

The library and the room you go into, the room full of books, is the most wonderful world you can enter, no matter what you may be interested in. We have just ordinary fiction and all the classics that tell how it used to be way back when. We have books today that you don't have to go through pages and pages of description, you can look at them and see them visually.

What are your favorite books, your favorite parts of the library?

All the classics. I love biographies telling about people's lives and all the things people did. Just think of all the old books by all those wonderful writers. Authors that point you in the right direction and have pleasant thoughts and dreams, happy thoughts about life. I don't like these horror stories today; they are so painful. Before we had TV Seldovia was very

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'I have to set limits for my activities, give myself permission to say NO.'

— Sharon Jean, borough assembly member
Soldotna

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interested in the library. People take too many things for granted; I think the community should take a lot of interest in their library, more than they do.

The concept of giving and volunteering seems important to you.

Yes. I think about all those grants the city gets now and how everyone wants to be paid for their service to the community. I suppose they can't be blamed; it is just different. In the early days we didn't have any of these grants and everyone had to learn to work together; the whole community worked together. You learned to know each other. If you were working together you became acquainted, you became a part of the community. I feel sometimes like I am old fashioned and inadequate trying to express myself and the way I feel. I guess there are certain values that are basic human values; these will never change.

You were born here in Seldovia. Was your entire family active in the community?

Yes. I was born here in 1907 and my mother was also born here. My father and mother both taught us about giving to the community. It was expected. My father was the commercial agent for Alaska Commercial Company. He did everything around the community; he was father, mother and doctor to many. He helped deliver babies and all that. I remember my mother acting as a nurse a lot. My sister and I would go through the village with her just like mini-public health nurses.

'I guess it is that I feel that I am part of Seldovia. You know, my roots are here; my mother was born here, I was born here, my children and grandchildren, with the exception of one, were born here. That is four generations of us here in Seldovia. It gives you a feeling of being a part of something, of being close.'

We always had to consider our fellow man and we had to do our own part in the world because it was not here for our own selfish needs and such.

How did your father get to Seldovia?

He came to Alaska as a Civil War veteran. He was in Sitka at the time of the transfer from Russia. He came to Seldovia with Alaska Commercial Company in the late 1800s. After the AC Company he went into his own mercantile store business and was postmaster. Mother, she was younger than he by a lot; they married (his second) when she was only 16. She was a wonderful wife and mother.

So you see, with my family being involved with health, with the store, with the mail, they were active alright. Dad was also involved with the schools. That had something to do with my desire to be a teacher. I never made it though.

What prevented you?

My dad died when I was 11 and my mom died when I was 16. I had a brother and two sisters, so I more or less had to help keep the family together. I wasn't able to go on to be a teacher. I did manage to get in a year at a business school in Washington.

When I came back, my sister and I and the children, we rented a place in Cordova. I went to work part time for Frank Foster, an attorney, and also worked for Kelly Robinson, who was editor of the Cordova Times. That was in 1923.

I had my brother and younger sister then and we were finding it a little bit difficult trying to keep on an even keel. I was trying to be a mother and father to youngsters who didn't like me disciplining them.

Then a letter came from Seldovia saying the postmaster's job was opening and why didn't I apply, after all my father had served as postmaster for years. I thought it over and talked it over with my siblings. My sister said, 'Yes, Susan, I think it will be much easier on all of us. I think you would make a good postmaster.' I said I didn't know, but the circumstances were such that I thought it would be the best thing for the family. If we were going to be together and stay together — there were people urging me to put the kids in an orphanage — then I had to do the practical thing. Ever since mother died, all the responsibilities of motherhood were on me. There were limited funds from Dad's estate, that helped with education.

Anyways, being practical and conservative I chose to return to Seldovia in 1925. I received an appointment in June of 1925. That is when I met and married Jack; we were married in 1926.

How did you and Jack meet?

He came to Seldovia in 1923 to work for Snug Harbor Packing Company. He stayed and trapped in the winter. I was working in a restaurant waiting for my appointment as postmaster to come through. The only services they had in those days were the Admiral Lines, and they had Alaska Steamship. →

'Years back, our aunts, grandmothers and mothers told young girls about womanhood. They taught how important is your clan, your emblem; they tell of the history of your emblem, about social life. Respect of the emblem is so important.'

— Esther Littlefield, cultural teacher, member of Kiksaidi Clan
Sitka

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But this one morning the boat brought in lots of passengers. The man I was working with didn't show up to help me, so there I was all by myself, opening up the restaurant and trying to do everything.

I was really pressed for time; in those days we had pole stoves to do our cooking on. Anyways, there was this nice young fella waiting here at this counter. I think I had 20 other people; he was asking me if I was alone here at the counter. It was about 7:30 a.m. I finally reached him and he ordered his ham and eggs over-easy, I still remember. I took care of him and he stayed and that's how we became acquainted. We were married a year later.

How did you manage to handle the children and everything else at age 16?

I had wonderful friends. I had this strong feeling the family should stay together. I believe that I am an unselfish person; I never put myself first.

I was really full of ideals. I haven't lost sight of them and I believe in my thinking, the positive thinking I use. My faith and knowing that there is a force of God, or whatever you want to name it, to hold on to.

I believe that a woman can be a mother and still be her own person. I think people worry too much about all that today. You must do your own thing first, you must be true to yourself. We all have a responsibility in this old world. The main thing in life is to be caring and to care for people no matter if the people around you respond.

That is why I send birthday cards every year. My mom and dad taught it to me, it makes people feel good. You do it for others, because you care about people. I literally send hundreds of cards a year.

How did you manage to balance out all your activities as you became wife, mother, postmaster, owner of a store, librarian?

Jack, when he was around, was very supportive. We always contributed together to the community. At first, when Jack and I were married, he wanted me to give up the postmaster job. You know how men were in those days. But we put the post office in our home. I'm a night person and Jack was always helping me with the children. When I went to a meeting, I was always doing something; he would help.

I was on the school board for years, I clerked for them starting in 1927. I served well over 40 years. It was the pattern of my life, to be involved and engaged in living.

I guess it is that I feel that I am part of Seldovia. You know, my roots are here; my mother was born here, I was born here, my children and grandchildren, with the exception of one, were born here. That is four generations of us here in Seldovia. It gives you a feeling of being a part of something, of being close.

You know, living in a small community forces you to grow. I was the postmaster for 49 years. In dealing with the public, you know, they can be irritating and demanding. But people are God's children. Who am I to demand approval or judge others?

No matter who you meet or who you are, if you sit down and visit with them, and get to know them, you find out that they really have so much to give. If you didn't make an effort, you may never know that person for their true self. I have always been in contact with people this way, behind the scenes, so to speak. After all, without the action of reaching out, what good are words?

Anything else on your philosophy of involvement?

'No matter who you meet or who you are, if you sit down and visit with them, and get to know them, you find out that they really have so much to give. If you didn't make an effort, you may never know that person for their true self. I have always been in contact with people this way, behind the scenes, so to speak. After all, without the action of reaching out, what good are words?'

Yes. I think the community is an extension of your family. If you want to be involved in making a place better for your family, get involved. It makes me very happy when someone visits our community and expresses joy at what they find here. You want to be proud of your home and happy in your home; you want it to be the best place for your family. You have in your home an extension of the community. And you have in the community, an extension of your home. It is like an eternal extension; the basis of your participation and your home in the community is the foundation for our borough, for our state, for our whole country. Everything has to start in your home.

If we are going to have the right kind of community, you have to take part. You don't have to go into regular politics to do so. All sorts of things bring good into the community, like your schools, your church and of course, your library. It is the only way you become acquainted and feel a part of the place. With involvement, you learn to love the people in the community and love the community as a whole.

'The reason the church has put women in this inferior position is that they are church-goers. The only way for the men to preserve control is by reserving the ministry for men only. They are afraid that if women are ordained and given equal position that the women will take over.'

— Dorothy Haaland, attorney, women's rights activist
Anchorage

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Sol Casidsid

The problems people confront when they immigrate are handled by families. If you are not blood related, you are culturally related. Filipinos are so interrelated, we are so close to each other. I always think that is why Americans are good in organizations, they don't have large families. It is hard with Filipinos, you cannot make enemies politically with them; they are going to feel it in their heart. They will never erase it from their heart. I have been here for 23 years and I can still see the two distinct cultures. — ***Sol Casidsid, Filipino Juneau***

Emma Widmark: 'I want action'

Leadership is a natural trait for Emma Widmark.

Born and reared in Southeast Alaska, she earned a graduate degree at Harvard University and now works in educational outreach with the Tlingit-Haida Central Council. Her name carries respect, and it motivates her life and purposes.

"I come from a well-known family," she says. "My father, who is very important to me, is a man of respect, a leader. My mother taught us to be proud. The way one exhibits pride is to honor their family name with good deeds."

Emma Widmark is grand camp president of Southeast's Alaska Native Sisterhood and on the board of the Alaska Native Women's Statewide Organization.

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Everyone is so upset with the dropout rate. Understanding and being upset isn't enough. I want action. Just think about the reality of some of these students. They leave for school, and learn absolutely nothing about their own culture.

The Tlingits have some of the most intricate artwork in the Northwest; do you hear of it, see it or learn about it? No. We have a tremendous culture and never learn about it in the educational system. What do the kids have to be proud of? Where are our priorities?

Dropping out is a very real option, it is a rebellion against the system, against suicide. For some, it is a painful but real option, it says, 'I will not be killed.'

Think about Tlingit women. Our roles as people, as a culture, are changing fast. We have some basic values that would serve anyone well; it is how one maintains them. My father and Dr. Mildred Sparks have taught me not to oppose change, but learn to change for something worthy of it.

Photo courtesy of Emma Widmark

We can't go back, (but) we must be what we are; it is a dilemma — how to feel strong, good about who we are in the midst of chaos. Native' women have to be strong. They don't have the luxury of being ultra-feminist. It would destroy us. We must have integrity; we must nurture and ensure our continuation as a people. That is a very heavy burden.

Native women can't afford to alienate men. To be a valuable people you need men and women. The Shakers ceased to exist because of celibacy; we can't afford to be celibate. Tlingit women are feminist. But they are realist, too. They know how culture exists. We are matrilineal; women have always had powerful positions in our culture. But, because of cultural change, middle-class values, those power positions by women have decreased. Younger men have problems with powerful women.

'My mother had the greatest influence on me. She was out walking from house to house to see who needed what. I grew up with that. One day when I became a woman, she said to me, 'After I am gone, I can see you doing my work.' What would I be doing, helping all these people, I thought.'

— Sadie Neakok, Native woman magistrate
Barrow

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Gwen Stovall

No race has any monopoly on discriminating against another.

I still want to keep in touch politically but I don't like the games. I think young women have a better chance of breaking through identity and political/racial barriers if they have the foresight and broad enough mind to look outside of what is here. Getting an education and having a dream means working toward that. If you have doubts or fears you will be held back from doing what you want to do.

— Gwen Stovell
Single parent, past co-chair of
Women for Political Action

Blanche McSmith: *'you must know your principles'*

Blanche McSmith's long-time commitment to the Democratic Party earned her both a spot in the Alaska Legislature and a widened perspective on politics as Alaska assumed its statehood.

McSmith became the only black woman ever to serve in the legislature when Gov. William Egan appointed her to the House of Representatives in 1960 to fill a vacancy created by Egan's attorney general appointment. She served just one term, but pioneered the way for black women in Alaska politics.

Originally from Texas, McSmith came to Alaska with her husband in 1949. After a 10-month stint in Kodiak, she moved to Anchorage and became a precinct stalwart in the Democratic Party. "It was clearly the party of the poor people, of struggling Americans," she says.

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Do you have any comments on the history of women's political participation in Alaska?

Although women have made strides in politics in Alaska, it is not enough. It is a male-dominated political picture here. What worries me is to find women being a part of it and not objecting. When a woman does object, she is usually ostracized. In Anchorage, I was quite active; I was the downtown precinct chair for 15 years.

I had been active in the Democratic Party and party politics and was encouraged to run. When I got into the body and the inner circle, I learned how things are done, which is very distasteful.

When I first went to a convention in Juneau in 1954, we were caucusing on the selection of a national committee person. There were two good people. For hours we debated. Finally the chair suggested the two gentlemen leave the room; we ended up choosing another person altogether.

Two Native leaders took me aside and began to tell me how the system works. They told me, many things are cited in the body where the decisions are made; they are often made before we come together. I said this is not for me and they challenged me, 'How can you ever change it if you stay out of the system?' Following that I was encouraged to run for office.

My emphasis was in social programs. The bills I introduced were in that area: the Booth Memorial Home for unwed mothers, adoptions, civil rights. I introduced the first bill calling for the Commission on Civil Rights and some labor bills.

I think the thing I brought to office was being fearless and courageous. I just must live out who I am. I am therefore controversial. You find that first you must live with yourself. You must find what you believe and allow change but you must know your principles.

'I have been so charmed by the Athabascans; they see your whole personhood.'

— Emma Widmark, Grand Camp president, Alaska Native Sisterhood
Juneau

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Jean Dementi: *'I never had fear in my life much'*

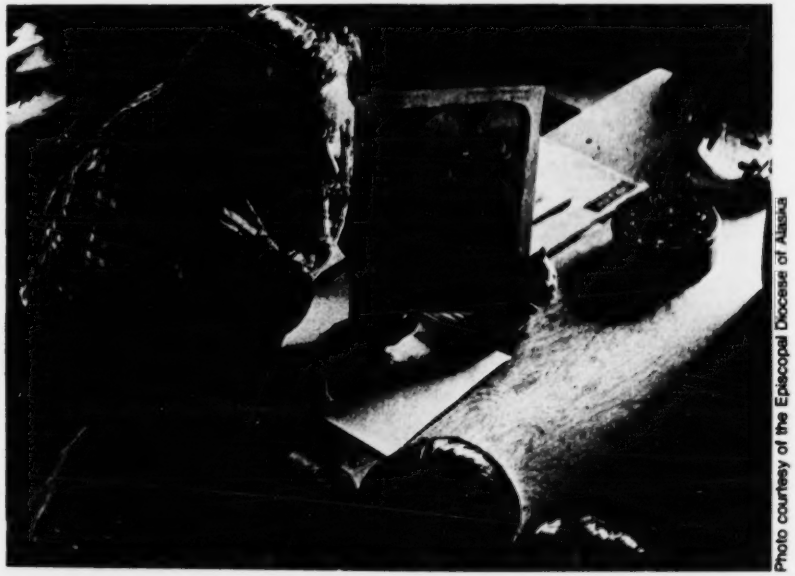

Photo courtesy of the Episcopal Diocese of Alaska

Jean Dementi knew she wanted to be a public health nurse from 7th grade on — but she didn't know she would be an ordained Episcopal priest until she was nearly 60.

In between she nursed a generation of Bush Alaska residents, serving as public health nurse and nurse-evangelist in Nenana, Fort Yukon and Shageluk. She made her longest stand in Shageluk — living in the area some 20 years, marrying and having a daughter with a Shageluk Native, ministering to the needs of the village.

She was finally ordained a priest in 1977 after a long debate within the Episcopal Church over the role of women as priests. She is now the priest at St. Jude's Episcopal Church, in North Pole.

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I came up to Alaska in 1951 as a church nurse, first to Nenana. Bishop Gordon asked me to go to Fort Yukon and be a hospital acting superintendent. I had to make all the decisions for running the hospital. That was not the first time a nurse had been in charge of a hospital. That was a very strengthening experience. After a year and a half, a doctor came. I left for furlough and then was sent to Shageluk in 1955 as a nurse-evangelist, which means, 'Jean, do it all except the things the church won't allow because you are a lay person.'

I was the first resident missionary in Shageluk. I lived there a total of 15 years — 10 years the first time, five years the second. I stayed in the area for 20 years. I married Jim Dementi, a Native from Shageluk; we have one daughter.

Of course, you never become a village person totally, and that was OK. The only time I ever spoke out in relation to village tradition was when it was based in fear. I never had fear in my life much. Some of the traditions they had when I arrived were based on fear. I tried to teach that I didn't have fears of ghosts and graveyards and the spirit world. That was the only thing I ever addressed.

They have very specific protocol for burials. There is always a Native person in charge, a man for a man's burial and a woman for a woman's. There was one practice they had of putting little bits of food in a sack in the coffin. Because other religious groups in the areas said it was un-Christian, the Natives got in the habit of hiding it. They never did it in front of white people.

Nineteen years after I was in the village, I was officiating at a burial (I only did the service and committal at the grave). They also had four candles and I asked about them. I said, 'Is it a Russian tradition?' She said, 'No, it is supposed to take four nights to get where you are going after you die, so there are four candles in the coffin and four matches in the right-hand pocket.' Then she said, 'Do you know why we put food in the coffin?'

I had wanted to ask for 19 years, but never did. She said, 'Well, it is just to let the ones know, who have gone on before, that we have not forgotten them.' To me that was very sacramental, just as much a sacrament as anything else you could think of; very loving. Nothing fearful about it at all. If you keep your mouth shut long enough in that situation you will learn what you need to learn.

Why did you leave Shageluk?

The thing that made me ask to be transferred after all those years is the alcoholism problem. So much worse than when I first went out to the village.

I never had any effect on lives as far as alcohol was concerned. What I was doing was burying my babies that I had delivered. I had been there long enough so that I was marrying them, and baptizing their kids. But I was burying too many and I really cared about them. I was more and more becoming a funeral director and not much else. I then asked to be transferred.

Some places are beginning to do something about it. They are voting to go dry. And that is the only way it will ever happen. I am an outside person and they could always say, 'She is different; she doesn't really know.' ◐

'When you reach a point where you feel that you are not contributing anything, get out.'

— Lois Irvin, community activist
Homer

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Dear Toni:

It was great to talk to you again the other day. Since then, I have given considerable thought to our conversation and have decided to write you. You were depressed and asked me how I have achieved what you consider a successful position in a society which is so difficult to please. What have I done? What would I advise you to do?

First, I will say you must be your own person. You cannot copy other people's personality or reaction to situations. To be your own person has something to do with your soul, the spirit or strength that drives you. In my case, if I have achieved anything, it probably has to do with the fact that I have been driven: I literally cannot help but be involved when issues deal with people, justice, freedom, equality, the right to live a good life and care for others. Many times I have argued and counseled myself to let go, to stop being committed, but when it comes down to the wire I say "yes" and, having said so, I cannot fail to give or do my best to carry through and see the issue solved and the project completed.

My husband says it is my pride that keeps me from failing — surely it bothers me to have anyone judge me, say that I failed or did not understand the intent of my efforts. It is probably this weakness of my personality that often gives me that sense of stress, fatigue and depression — a common feeling among successful women that have the drive to deal with an overcritical environment mostly controlled by men equally insecure and searching for an identity.

When I forget about reward, recognition, acceptance, and just enjoy what I am doing, life is a joy — I never get tired, feel fatigued or stressed. When I am at my best I am this way — I love people. I love to give and share and pass on to others such knowledge or wisdom that I have known or gained over the years.

Is this the result of the love and unselfish caring I grew up with? I think so, because I believe that besides the inner resources one has, a successful person must be nurtured in love. In this regard, I have been fortunate. My mother was a wonderful woman, part of a close family where caring and sharing was a tradition. A widow at 32, she dedicated all her life to raising three children and to the recognition of human rights, liberty and equality. Not an easy task in Fascist Italy.

The sense of security and trust in people I had as a child has given me the courage and strength I needed many times in my life — during the war in Italy and here — to adjust and adapt to a changing world. My mother was a proud and cultured woman. Knowledge was always revered in our home. As a child one of my ways to escape tasks that I did not want to do was to read — mother would never disturb a person with a book!

Yes, I do have love for knowledge. People all the time are chasing power, and most of our modern-day activities are dominated by overbearing egos and conflicts. True power is in knowing! If you know, nobody can take it away from you. Remember that if you set great values to your possessions, position of power, material things, influence or even ideas, you become vulnerable; you will feel threatened and fearful that things will be taken from you. True power and the optimum position rests in the ability to give and share knowledge with others.

As I have said, I am a fortunate woman. I have a good family, my husband and children and grandchildren share my concerns and support my involvement — I need their love.Fred and I, together, have raised a good family. Applying a blend of family traditions and modern ideas, we have produced children who are caring and involved people. Fred and I are friends and give each other space for growth and individual expression.

So, dear friend, back to your concern for feeling lonely and unappreciated for your efforts and caring . . . You have done well! You are your own woman, you have gone back to school and gained knowledge in a field you love. You have an appointed position that will give you a chance to apply your knowledge in the making of a better city for a better society. You have a good family, good children, and you are now a young grandmother — be happy with your accomplishments.

As for me, I am proud of you. You are one of my best students and you give me the reward I need as a teacher to continue in my efforts in sharing my knowledge with others; as a member of the municipal assembly, I appreciate your advice and trust your judgment; as a friend, I enjoy your involvement in politics and your activism. Through you, I see the continuation of good citizenship and care for others.

We need each other, as you can see. Thank you for asking me to be your adviser and friend.

Love,

— Lidia

Born in Italy, Lidia Lippi Selkregg is Professor of Resource Economics and Planning at the University of Alaska, Anchorage and a member of the Anchorage Municipal Assembly.

'A successful woman in Alaska is out having lunch with others, making good money. It is not like Los Angeles where she is at the arm of some rich man. She has her own business or she is involved in her own projects.'

— Donna Morris, printer, union leader
Anchorage

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Photo by Rob Stapleton

'The point to me is to be productive, and that is the key for your wellbeing — to feel like you are doing something that you want to do, not because someone else feels like you should do it. If you have a fight internally about what you want, then you are doing what someone else wants.' — Georgianna Lincoln, Doyon Corp. board member Fairbanks

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Eleanor Andrews:

'change is important to me'

Eleanor Andrews is black, female and powerful — a relatively uncommon combination in Anchorage.

As director of human resources for the Municipality of Anchorage, she is responsible for personnel matters in the largest municipal organization in Alaska. As a member of the mayor's Cabinet she participates in the highest councils of local government.

Andrews, 38, grew up in Los Angeles and moved to Alaska in 1965. She worked at McLaughlin Youth Center and as business agent for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, along with her involvement in politics and government.

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What are some experiences you have had as part of creating change?

In every work situation, civic involvement, political involvement, I was making change. Otherwise, I wouldn't be involved. Change is a relative thing for my own comfort zone; change is real important to me.

I get in a lot of situations that are less than ideal and I get a lot of personal fulfillment in making things different. I like pressured jobs without a lot of commotion where I can impact change.

Did you experience a lot of change in your work at McLaughlin Youth Center?

It isn't the place to impact change. It is supposed to be a treatment facility. Kids are there because they never got the support they needed. They literally get to the end of their rope and end up in jail. Even if you help them develop the attitudes, appropriate behavior to handle life's problems you don't see a lot of immediate success. We at least developed skills to help kids cope.

I know you have been involved in labor. How did you come into that?

I needed a job. I had worked with the State of Alaska when the public employees voted to go union; I had some minimal involvement with that, examining the issues and 'What would happen if?' type of questions.

When I left Mclaughlin, I didn't work for a year and a half. I take breaks every five or six years, to recoup and recharge my thinking. When my money ran out, I followed up an ad for a business agent for IBEW. After I made the first cut, I contacted people I knew in the association and said, 'If you have the opportunity, put in a good word for me.' I believe that I got the job through the assistance of people I know.

Sometimes I think I have gotten things because I am a curiosity. A lot of people here have not had much association with black people. I think that for those who haven't, whether they are conscious bigots or not, I am a comfortable black person to be around.

Sometimes, I wish I was more ethnic. If I talked like I was from the North, wore a natural hairstyle and dressed differently, I doubt if I would be sitting here where I am. I have never been in the situation where I felt overtly discriminated against, where it had a strong impact on my life and development. Sure, I have had isolated incidents. Because I haven't had that personal experience, I was less than empathetic to those who had to fight that since kindergarten. I am now more aware of how people treat each other because of perceived differences.

How was it you avoided personal discrimination?

Maybe it happened and I was not noticing. I think it was the environment. I grew up in an →

'I go to students, tell how raised, how parents were in peace like calm ocean, never have worry, right now the worriness comes into all villages.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

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'When I stop feeling that (I can make change) I will be gone. So many people in government feel like they are trapped, mired down in muck and can't see daylight. It is terrifying to me. If I thought I had those kinds of bonds on me daily, I couldn't be here.'

integrated environment in California. I came to Alaska; my father was here since the 1940's, he knew everyone and I was totally accepted.

I think that a lot of black women have a sense of, 'I must present myself for my race, be a credit to the race.' That is something that is drummed into black kids early on. You don't do something for you, you do it to be a credit to your race.

That is a lot of pressure. So it is like you have these certificates for the black population. Some black women are driven, as we all are, by a sense of inadequacy. You have to be superwoman to be anybody. A lot of people have that personally, but can you imagine an entire race? That is a lot of baggage. You are either wonderful or nothing.

In your job as director of human resources, what is your biggest challenge?

Learning to work in this large government structure. For the last eight years of my life, I was an operator. I did my own thing, made my own agenda. So, I have developed a lot of patience and recognized the existence of systems and how to work with them. Not to the point that I buy into something that is tradition for tradition's sake, or non-productive behavior.

Do you feel like you can make change in the bureaucracy?

When I stop feeling that (I can make change) I will be gone. It is a difficult place to make change. It isn't change for the sake of change. So many people in government feel like they are trapped, mired down in muck and can't see daylight. It is terrifying to me. If I thought I had those kinds of bonds on me daily, I couldn't be here.

Any experiences with discrimination or powerlessness that hit home?

One of the only times was when I was looking for housing in Anchorage. In 1968, we moved to Anchorage and I spent three days looking. I finally figured out that we were not getting a place to live because we were black. My husband had just gotten out of school; we packed up a U-Haul trailer.

That was one of the only times I felt depressed; I knew I could not change who I was. It was scary because I was a young mother with two kids and no place to live. Eventually, a woman helped to find us a place and I lived through it all.

'I think that a lot of black women have a sense of, 'I must present myself for my race, be a credit to the race.' That is something that is drummed into black kids early on. You don't do something for you, you do it to be a credit to your race. That is a lot of pressure.'

Any personal influences that have been real strong?

Yeah, you know men have this historically formalized way of grooming their leaders. They have a mentor system. Women are too new to have this yet. But I did have this woman who really influenced me. I was looking for work and this woman hired me to work at McLaughlin.

Rose and I recognized something in each other. She taught me all about systems. We had a really neat kind of sharing and supportive friendship, and supervisory-subordinate relations. She was Jamaican, very fair-skinned, well educated and proper. I was a scrappy, fiesty, street-wise kid from L.A. I didn't know anything about being a counselor, I just went to school with criminals. She had a master's degree in nursing. You know if you have a master's degree in the English system, that is pretty heavy stuff.

Rose and I did a lot of sharing. She was the first person who taught me about systems. And how you work within systems to get what you want. I was ready to go in there with the ramrod, and anything or anybody that got in my way, I would knock their blocks off. Cuz, I was young and I knew I was right.

She and I had some initial clashes because of our background and style. But there was this healthy respect for one another. It grew to love. She just died. It took her dying for me to reflect on the relationship.

I used to really get angry with her because she really believed in change within the system. 'Play their game and covertly operate,' she'd say. 'Tell them what they want to hear and then go do your own thing.' I'd say, 'Let's just be up front with what we want.' Our styles were different. But I learned the value of having a more moderate approach. I did a lot of growing up working at McLaughlin.

You know, I learned that women have got to learn to trust each other and stop back-biting. We must help each other.

'I strive to give people a sense of vitality, qualities which compose humans. It is my inner drive at work saying, 'this is you, your work and you are strong, you are real.'

— Joan Bugbee Jackson, artist
Cordova

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Alice Johnstone: 'I close the door'

Alice Johnstone is living proof that a firm conservationist can succeed in the realms of business and politics in Alaska.

The 57-year-old Johnstone moved to Juneau with her family in 1940 to run a dairy farm and live the primitive lifestyle that came with it. Her parents were naturalists, and their bond with the environment was transfered to Alice.

Her marriage brought her to Sitka, where she now serves as a member of the borough assembly, the Salvation Army advisory board, and the Sitka Community College Council. She is manager of the Sears Roebuck outlets in Sitka and Petersburg,a businesswoman, a mother of four, a housewife and an activist in the Sitka Conservation Society.

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I have to say that I don't think of myself first as a woman. I feel myself more as being a person rather than being a woman. I felt very uncomfortable reading the women's literature at first; I think it was probably the cynicism and resentment coming through.

(Getting involved) was my reaction to being a woman in my generation — after the war when women were suddenly encouraged to have big families and keep the kitchen floors waxed and shiny and curtains crisped and starched, and this was how you were supposed to get your pleasure from life, from performing in those realms.

I was into reading all those women's magazines that told you how to do this. In the '50s, I had my own private rebellion against this. I wanted to be part of the female population in Sitka, to coffee-klatch and go downtown together, but I simply could not get into it, in spite of the fact that I tried hard. The things that were valuable to me just didn't seem to be valuable to the other women.

In my own private rebellion, I quit reading about women. I quit reading anything that said how women are supposed to act, any women's magazines. From there, I just went along my own way. I did things that were comfortable for me, which included going to work full-time.

My mother said, 'Oh, Alice, your children want you to stay home.' I said, 'Mother, my kids don't know it, but I am a lot better mother because I have my own work.' So, I had family pressures to stay home and be a mother.

Then in the '60s, I started to get acquainted with younger women who were getting liberated. I had a friend who said I should read 'The Feminine Mystique' by Betty Friedan. I said, 'Forget it; I don't need anything that tells me how to keep my floor shiny.'

I don't know what finally motivated me to read it, but I did. That book, I could have written. She talked about the things I had gone through, the same sorts of things. I should have known that I was not unique; other women had gone through the same sorts of things. I recommend this as a book younger women should read, so they can find out what their mothers have been through.

For so long, there was just nothing. You never had a sense of contributing to your family, your society. . . . I had a neighbor (whose) whole life was dusting knick-knacks. She ended up an alcoholic; one can't say it is because of her life work, but maybe she got tired of feeling nothing for nothing. I just couldn't get into that business of the whole world is dusting knick-knacks and keeping the floor shiny.

Why did your run for public office?

It was a traditional thing in my family to be concerned about what is going on in the community and to take an active part in shaping what is happening. It is my concern and respect for things that shaped my conservation interest as well.

Is it very popular to be an environmentalist in this part of Alaska?

Certainly not.

Alaska has this 'Rape, rip it up and get out' ethic. It is sort of a tradition; it has happened ever since the Russians got here. We need things to be more stable and to have a situation where people can have a future in Alaska.

How do you deal with your unpopular stands?

I close the door behind me. It is an important part of my philosophy. It if isn't going to work, forget it; don't brood on it. If it is behind you, you can't change it . . . .

'I got interested in and began to read the history of colonization both in the U.S. and by the U.S. I discovered it is true; if you are a Native person, it just isn't the same for you.'

— Clare Swan, chief of Kenaitze Indian tribe
Kenai

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Rachel Craig:

'share, not acquire'

Rachel Craig's job is to preserve the traditions of her Inupiat people while helping young people acquire the skills to survive in the American culture of laws and corporations.

She is director of the Material Development Center for the Northwest Arctic School District in Kotzebue. Her primary task is to develop school curriculum incorporating Inupiat language and traditions into state programs. She also helped organize the first Elders' Conference, in Kotzebue, as well as the NANA Corporation's spirituality-oriented Spirit Committee.

She was born in 1930 in Kotzebue and reared in traditional ways — thus preserving her understanding and fluency in Inupiat. Now she is working to pass her knowledge on to younger people of the region.

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There are layers and layers of problems for Native women to face. We have to know who we are; we need to know our family trees, our mother's family and our father's family, both sides. We need to know who they are, and to know their traditions. For younger Native women, they need to have the elders' approval on what they are doing from a cultural standpoint. They need to learn responsibility to the tribe, because we are not an individualistic people.

This is all very difficult because when we go to school we are taught to strive for the best grades; to be in the spotlights; to get the best job, with the most money; to have many things around you, the bigger your house, the flashier your car, the more elegant your furniture — all supposed to show success.

But from our culture, a person learns to share, not acquire. If a hunter is successful, he shares his catch with those less fortunate. Anything we are blessed with that we brought home is for the use of feeding someone else, clothing someone else, warming someone else, talking to or loving someone else. It is always giving that matters. Young Native women need to understand both the white and Native worlds and realize that there is room for both of them in their lives.

Tell me about your involvements with the elders' conferences.

I was raised by my grandparents. I learned the language, absorbed the language.

I went to work for NANA Corporation, and used the radio a lot to enhance the image of the corporation and to start gaining support from the people for my job. I was trying to locate all the historic cemetery sites and other historical areas.

Because I spoke the language I could go out and live with the people in the villages and gather the data. I kept tape-recording the sessions in the villlages because I kept hearing all kinds of stories and information that I knew I would forget if I didn't do something with it. I felt like I wanted to preserve the details.

Our kids need to know these stories and it could be integrated into our schools, social studies or something. They know more about Napoleon than they do about their own people. This was a small part of the initiative to get our elders together to discuss topics and hear their stories.

The sessions were effective primarily because people listened. It reminded many of the way it used to be and made them remember what their parents used to teach them. As a result of the conferences, many more people became interested in their own heritage.

What did the elders impress upon you?

At one of the conferences, there were some that took me aside and said, 'You will have opposition some time in this life. It may not be easy for you; people get jealous. But I want you to remember we are all behind what you are doing, because it is for the good of our people: our kids, their parents, their grandparents.'

I remember others who told me, 'Thank you for the work you are doing; we were falling asleep on the job and it has taken your generation to wake us up, like pulling us by the hair and setting us up again to teach our young children the wisdom which was passed on to us.'

I think of other people who have the dream to teach our kids the Inupiat culture and language as well as teach them English and English history. When we teach them both, it will be the strength of our people. They will then have their feet in both cultures.

We have both worlds; we have to make the corporations successful in order to retain our land and we must fight to know our identity so that we have the inner strength to face life and its problems. ○

'The people who had a strong impact on me told me, 'You are not a genius, but if you work hard, you can achieve something.'

— Jo Ryman Scott, civic and cultural activist
Fairbanks

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Martha Reid:

'we were last to go'

Martha Reid had been around the logging industry most of her life — but since 1973, she's spent more time in courtrooms than logging camps. The reason: when her family's logging company went out of business, they filed suit against major lumber corporations they thought had engaged in predatory business practices.

It's been a long, hard battle — with a preliminary legal victory for the Reids now on appeal in the federal courts. Martha Reid doesn't expect much by way of tangible benefits from the fight, but she does hope to win a legal victory on principle.

She was born in 1923 in Washington State, moved to Southeast Alaska as a child, raised in logging camps, married a logger and raised her own children at their camp outside Petersburg. Since losing the logging business — and starting their lawsuit — the Reids have operated their own sand and gravel business in Petersburg.

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I went outside to business college and met my husband Glen. The war started and he was drafted into the Army. In 1945 we came back to Petersburg, where Glen and his brothers built a little float house just like when I was a little girl. We bought a tractor and towed ourselves out to Skiff Island and started logging. It was a lot like when I was little; no running water, no refrigeration, and a wood stove. My sister came with me; she married Glen's brother.

She had a little baby and I was expecting. Each year we got a few more amenities and a few more children. It was lonesome. There was not anyone beyond my sister to talk to; no entertainment, nothing to take away the grind of work. And we were young, our early 20s. We had no idea how to keep house efficiently, so we spent hours learning.

Photo by Heidi Lee

I was pretty well adjusted, because that is how I grew up. I did know how to do things like wrap ham in cloth dipped in vinegar to keep it longer. We took meat out there and had no refrigeration. I knew how to can things and how to heat water on the stove and I was used to the outhouse.

I must say, the children loved it. We came into town when they had to go to school and in the spring as soon as school was out, we went to camp and the kids loved it. They could play and construct little houses on floats and play with driftwood boats. A great place for kids and easy for us because we didn't have to worry about them.

You filed a lawsuit in 1973, based on the Sherman Antitrust Act, against the lumber companies. Your case is now before U.S. Supreme Court. What made you take such an action?

We were angry. We could see what was happening to all of our friends. We were the last ones to go down. What they would do is pay them for their logs and then after they had gotten them going, they would pay them less than they knew it cost to log — deliberately — to make them go broke. Then, they would take the outfit over, hire the person who owned it as a manager and continue to pretend that it was an independent logging firm. For political reasons it was important for the companies to have that image.

We didn't realize this was happening for awhile because as the men lost their companies, they were too ashamed to admit it. When they (the companies) finally grabbed us, we thought we were not going to pretend that nothing ever happened.

I am not sure but that we haven't just made the companies more secretive now. The documentation for the lawsuit was so blatant — I guess they thought no one would ever read their records or correspondence. They wrote down everything.

What was it like personally?

It was traumatic. I couldn't talk about it for years because of the litigation. It is hard to work for years and zap, it is all of a sudden over. We decided to fight for the remnants.

I don't believe in anything big firms say any more. I am skeptical of politicians. I know that it is bad to be disillusioned, but I am. The mills really have a stranglehold on up here and they don't seem to be changing one bit.

The companies don't want our case settled because they don't want to set a precedent in the Lower 48. Also, if they can delay a few more years, they will have taken all the logs up here and then they won't care. It will not matter if we win or lose; there will be no more timber. I don't know; I am afraid all we have done is teach them to be clever. ○

'He know I teach about feeling, about healing with my hands.'

— Della Keats, healer
Kotzebue

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Marge Mullen: *'I am a lady with a lot of energy'*

When I was a kid, there was this little nun I had in the sixth through eigth grades whose theme in life was, 'Dare to be different.' She put this over to a lot of kids; we were pretty good friends. I was shy, the oldest of six kids, Irish Catholic family, you know. She gave me a lot of time and encouraged me to do things that I would not have had the courage to do otherwise.

That nun instilled in Marge Mullen a willingness to risk that is still the foundation of her lifestyle. Born in Chicago in 1920, she was 24 when she moved to Alaska with her husband in 1945.

She homesteaded on the Kenai Peninsula in 1947, she pioneered local conservation battles, she fought for candidate quality in the Democratic Party, she supported issues which give women their due rights. Marge has done for many Alaskans what that Chicago nun did for her.

Today, Marge and daughter Peggy own and operate Four Seasons Restaurant in Soldotna.

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Have you always been active politically in a party?

I have been a strong Democrat. I think the principles of the Democratic Party are ones I believe in, you know, people-oriented. I grew up in an Irish-Catholic ethnic neighborhood in Chicago. Chicago is a very political city; I brought this attitude with me to Alaska.

We lived in ethnic communities. It was the late 1920s and 1930s; most of my family was active politically. It was always a subject of discussion. It was my family heritage; everyone realized that politics affects people's lives. It still does today.

For women, the issues are economic equality and equal rights. You see, I was getting a divorce when I discovered this: I had to fight for three years to get my share of the homestead just because they listed the male as head of household and homestead. This meant I was not eligible. I fought it and finally received my equal share of the property.

Can you describe your experience of homesteading in 1947?

I have to tell you, the man I married got polio and was not ambulatory after we were married seven years. I did all the carrying water, digging wells, chopping wood, tending field and 1,000 hens. I had four kids and that was a lot. I am a lady with a lot of energy, then and now.

You know, when people talk about subsistence, I know exactly what it means. We subsisted without any income at all. I had to hunt and tend the fields because that was our dinner, our food. I lived here before we had electricity. I enjoy working in the fields. That was a big longing I had in Chicago. I couldn't do it there; every time I dug up my yard, I hit cans.

You've worked quite hard for conservation?

We organized 15 years ago to see that part of the Kenai Moose Range was put into a wilderness area. It didn't happen for years and finally under the Carter administration, we won!

I find so much love in nature, solace and joy in things of creation. It is for this that I work hard to preserve the land. ○

'I can remember when we would walk home at midnight down 125th Street past the Apollo Theater on Lennox Avenue. I learned a lot there; the community (Harlem) takes care of its own and teaches survival skills.'

— Jewel Jones, municipal Director of Social Services
Anchorage

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Photo courtesy of Bertha Moses

Bertha Moses is village health aide at Allakaket and the mother of 11.

Open Letter to Young Women:

I am 52 years old, I was born and raised in Alatna across the river from Allakaket. I went to school, the missionary school at Allakaket, until I was 14. I didn't even pass the 5th grade because everyone stayed out at the camps. Only way to make a living was to subsist in camps; children didn't go to school.

We spoke three languages: Eskimo, Athabascan and English. Most of the time you stay in camp, all year long. So a lot of people in their 30s and 40s didn't learn to read and write. Most people these ages, who know how to read and write, are self-taught. We didn't have many magazines or books; those that we did, we read over and over. My father had Collier's, a weekly magazine. I used to read that all the time.

I think it was in 1941; a guy was skiing from Fairbanks to Barrow, he stopped here and advertised books for sale. My mother and father decided to get a Bible and medical book. They paid $16 and it took over one year to arrive; back then that was a lot of money. When we got the books they didn't want girls to read the medical books because they saw pictures of bodies, but we could read the Bible.

I started reading the medical books more and more, read a lot. First thing I read about was how a girl get pregnant. I guess that was the start of me being health provider. I was 13 or 14. I read the book a lot and didn't understand most of it. Nowadays, children have lots of books, lots of opportunity to get an education. One of my biggest wishes is for our people to become doctors, nurses, health providers for our people.

I like being health provider. I first took a course in 1954, I learned first aid, vital signs, how to bandage people, things like that. In 1958, a public health nurse came here on a field visit. She asked women at mission school if they knew anyone who would want to be a health aide. The school nurse suggested me so the public health nurse trained us for 3 hours a night for a week. I think they picked me because I sutured a wound and delivered a baby before.

I had 11 children of my own, lost one, have 10 now. Husband walked the floor with the kids because I was out with work a lot. I was voluntary health provider for 11 years. We didn't have a clinic so I worked right in my home. My children were around and watched; I thought they may learn something. We didn't know we would get money, it was to help our people, that's all.

The early days, the first time I start working, I give shots. We had a radio to talk with, when radio do not work and we had emergencies, it was hard on me, I didn't want to see hurt people. But I wanted to help.

After 1958, more training, a little here and there at clinics and hospitals in Fairbanks and Anchorage, a little when public nurse come to village. I went to night school and finished 8th grade in 1968. I got high school through GED (General Education Diploma) in 1980. I took accounting and some college credits with health aide training. I am now a certified community health practioner. We now have a clinic. We were taught how to help each other; that is why I am health aide; that is why I did it; we all did it voluntary for so long. I hope our young people will want to help, too.

— Bertha Moses

'For years, I sat back not saying anything, getting mad at myself.'

— Alice Wardlow, Tundra Women's Coalition
Bethel

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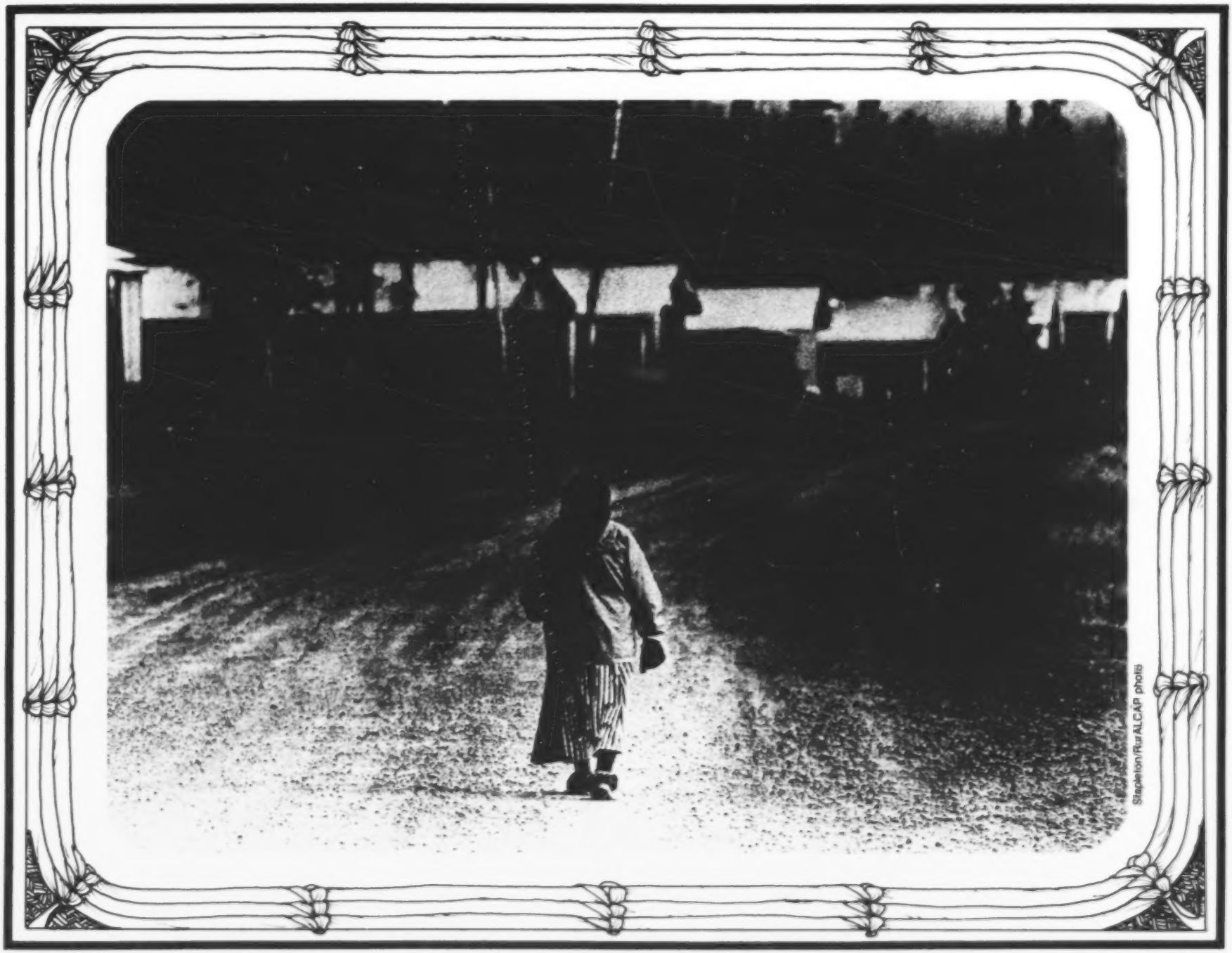
Stapleton/RuralCAP photo

'I probably deal with self-esteem, values and motivation most in my teaching.'

— Diane Carpenter, teacher, activist
Bethel

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Diane Tickell:

'the fullness of the priesthood'

Two things are constant in Diane Tickell: her energy, and her ability to give.

She is actually *Reverend* Tickell — the priest at St. George's Episcopal Church in Cordova. In that capacity she creates new projects and forums for her ministry while opening her doors to those in need. On the phone with a social worker, visiting someone at the hospital, volunteering at the women's center, running her dogs . . . she is usually on the go and concerned with her community — one that ranges from her home in Cordova to the world community as a whole.

She was born and raised on the East Coast, the daughter of an advertising executive and "a socialite type." She graduated from Smith College and secretarial school, went to work in Boston for the Red Cross, and met her husband — an Army sergeant named Bud.

They wound up in Juneau in 1946, where Diane worked as a social worker. Tragedy struck when their first son was born mentally retarded, and Bud developed tuberculosis. "With the experience of having a retarded child, for the first time in my life, I knew what a true minority was, and I realized that I was not very humble," she says.

Bud died in 1968, after long struggle and confinement, and Diane embarked on a new way of life that eventually made her a priest in the Episcopal Church.

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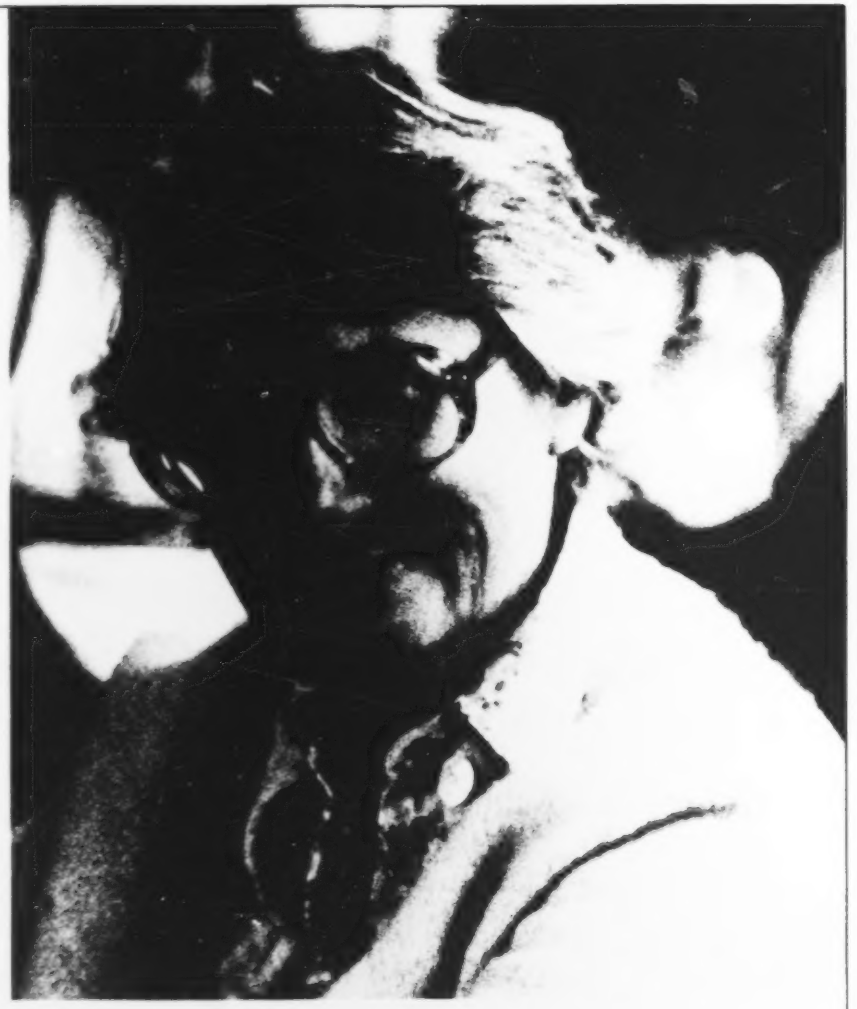
What is it like to be a woman priest; what are some of your experiences?

I can't imagine anything more interesting than to be a priest. When you get in there and really are a part of people's lives at times of joy, and times of sorrow and tragedy, you discover the fullness of priesthood.

I think those unexpected things, when people really grapple to respond to a situation, are times of excitement. I get a great deal of joy in seeing someone grow, mature in their faith and their understanding of God. There was this guy, a fisherman, who asked me the other day, 'What does the Bible say about greed?' It turned out he had been fishing and an incident happened that really appalled him; he was really troubled that he had not spoken out.



'I can't imagine anything more interesting than to be a priest. When you get in there and really are a part of people's lives at times of joy, and times of sorrow and tragedy, you discover the fullness of priesthood.'

'I spoke out at the first sea mammal hearings in Nome in 1972-73; saying our subsistence which is being threatened is the equivalent to white people's vegetables and livestock being threatened. Think about taking away your gardens and your herds.'

— Martha Aiken
Barrow

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'I think that a priesthood that is just male is truncated. I never use that word, but it means cut off, coming up short. I know that if you talk in terms of a congregation made up of all these diverse people — different ages, men and women — there are some who I can never reach and there are some who another person, or man, can never really reach. I think it should be obvious to people that when you have both men and women, you have a much fuller expression of a faith.'

This, to me, is what my job is all about. Very few other things give me such joy as watching someone mature in their faith.

Because women priests are so new, I wonder if you have a sense of what you, as a woman, bring to the priesthood?

Yes, sure I do. I think that a priesthood that is just male is truncated. I never use that word, but it means cut off, coming up short. I know that if you talk in terms of a congregation made up of all these diverse people — different ages, men and women — there are some who I can never reach and there are some who another person, or man, can never really reach. I think it should be obvious to people that when you have both men and women, you have a much fuller expression of a faith. In the Catholic Church, there are some remarkable women, many of whom have gone into orders. But it is a limited outlet and they (the whole church) are losing out, no question about it.

When were women ordained to the Episcopal Church?

Women were first ordained irregularly in 1974.

Were you angry that the church took so long to ordain women, irregularly at that?

At first, I didn't think in those terms. I was not questioning the church in terms of male or female. I wasn't one of those who, at age 6, looked up at the altar boy and said, 'Why can't I be one, too?' I didn't question it; I mean I am a later bloomer.

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'It took me six years to pass the air traffic controller's test. I used the excuse that 'I can't' for years, then I reversed it and said 'I can.' I have never given up after that.'

— Josephine Aufenkamp, juvenile intake officer
Former police officer, former air traffic controller, Barrow

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Did you experience discrimination?

Yes. I also experienced other women's anger and frustration, and I had a lot of my own. But I must say it seemed harder for young people; there were situations where I was aware that some of the women were extremely angry. It took me awhile to get tuned in, but once I was tuned in I was angry.

What were you angry about?

The way the church was dealing with women. I think the pain and anger that I felt was more as I got into the ordination issue. I mean you meet some people who treat you like dirt. It would make me mad as hell if one of my good friends was hurting for reasons that were totally unreasonable.

When you get into wearing a collar, the dirty looks people give; I mean really dirty looks, and the awful things they would say . . .

Why did you decide to be ordained?

Well, it was a process. There is a series of 'tests' that you must go through in the Episcopal Church. It is extensive and I think it is, overall, a good process. It forces you to test your vocation and serves as a peer testing process.

Women were not allowed to be ordained when I went to seminary back in the later '60s and early '70s. The church decided women could be deacons, so I was seeking ordination in that capacity.

However, I was involved with other women from my seminary, Episcopal Divinity School (then ETS), and from other seminaries working toward changing the church's attitude and mind on the question of women's ordination as priests. My own experience was terribly painful and really terrific, both.

'I am very much aware this is the best place for me to be. The rest of the world is always so terribly appealing and glamorous, but I chose to come back to Alaska and I have a purpose here.'

As I recall, my son Mark and I were driving back to Alaska from the East Coast; it was June of 1974. We had bought an old car and we were broke, I mean I didn't have a job as a woman deacon, and we had bought this car. We piled everything we owned in it and headed back to Alaska driving . . . I was in debt and had used up all the insurance from my husband's death. That was pressing down on me. It was a painful break; we were really turning our backs on the East and heading west again. It hurt because I loved it back there and I had very dear and close friends.

We came back to Alaska, where we were in the process of electing a new bishop. I got a phone call from a woman who I knew from working on the ordination of women. She said she knew that some women were going to be ordained by a couple of bishops in late July. Would I like to join them?

My immediate response was 'Yes.' I had no question; I had never questioned that. She told me to think about it and that I was absolutely not to talk to anyone about it because it was terribly secret and she would call back in a few days.

That was a hellish time for me, perfectly terrible. Now I realize there were a couple of friends I could have borrowed money from but being told not to talk about a pressing issue was terribly, terribly hard because I needed desperately to talk to somebody about it. And, of course, back East all the women who were considering this move got together. I ultimately decided not to do it and I have known all along that I lacked the courage and vision that it would have taken.

I was very lucky because the next year there was another irregular ordination of women — five of us — and I did it. I don't consider it a big thing at all; the frontrunners deserve the credit. I always appreciated the terrible risk they took.

Sometimes I hurt so bad that I wasn't sharing the experience of ordination with them. They went through terrible things, name-calling and such. I was lucky to have a second chance. I always felt it underlined what those first women did. It said, 'Folks, this is going to keep happening; we are not going to go away. We are not going to fade into the dust. You cannot sweep us under the rug.' I'm sure we made a difference and I am glad we did it.

Did you return to Alaska after ordination?

Yes. I was ordained in Washington, D.C. and came back to Alaska. Cochran was my bishop and by that time I had talked to him about my decision. He asked me not to go. He felt I should wait for the church process to take effect. It was the same old thing, like being black and told not to rock →

'My momma taught me how to be independent because she always said, 'I might not be here tomorrow and you will know how to do it by yourself.'

— Patricia Ray, utility branch manager, Shiloh Baptist Church
Anchorage

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the boat. I was not permitted to function as a priest.

How did you respond?

I had a whole mixture of feelings. If I had been functioning as a priest it would have been different, but you don't know what it is like until you do it.

What was your experience in seminary?

My mind blew open! During that first year I really became acquainted with feminism for the first time in a meaningful way. My whole ideas of women and the role of women in the church were totally blown wide open. It was so fascinating. I've often thought it was like putting your feet in the pool, wading around and becoming fascinated. You want to go deeper because it is so enticing.

What sort of things opened up for you?

It was a gradual process. It was a whole different world Outside. That was in 1970-71. I was in Boston when Cambodia was invaded and all that sort of activity. I was involved in the fringes of it, a radically different world. I found it very exhilarating.

If you want to radicalize somebody, put them in jail for a night. I participated in a demonstration where we acted as victims of bombing going on in Cambodia. I was arrested and hauled off and spent the night in jail. I was released on my own recognizance after a court hearing the next day.

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'I have told women not to go to men to get total support for their ministry. I mean you can go to men to talk about the possibility and their experience, but that is not where you want to go for support. They look at it from their eyes, which is different than a woman going into the priesthood.'

There was a wonderful, alive spirit during what was a very destructive time in our history. You know, you talk about role models; some of the older women I knew had been involved in fighting for justice for years around Cambridge and Boston — some remarkable old gals; from all levels of society, too.

There was a valuable experience I remember from coming back to Alaska one summer. I was responsible for a Sunday school adult class. . . . I said, 'I have a question that has been troubling me ever since I got home, and that is, does anybody know there is a war going on Outside?'

I'm telling you, if I had thrown a tear gas bomb in the middle you'd be less astounded at the effects that had. There was one woman there; she and her husband had come from Washington, D.C., and she said, 'I am so glad you asked that question, because I have been so terribly troubled.'

It turned out a lot of people lived in Alaska because they didn't want anything to do with or know about it all. It's a good way of dodging; they wanted nothing to do with it.

There is a tension in my life about some of the dire needs in this world, and here I am living a middle-class, comfortable life. It is very troublesome. I think what I need to do is make a retreat. I can't do it by myself. I need to be in a retreat situation to resolve my tensions.

A retreat forces you in a community situation to be quiet for awhile. It forces you to really trust the Spirit. The Spirit could say, 'Go back to Cordova,' (it wouldn't say it in that way, you know) and I would come back. I am very much aware this is the best place for me to be. The rest of the world is always so terribly appealing and glamorous, but I chose to come back to Alaska and I have a purpose here.

'I'm not one of those people who take stands because I am a woman, 'cuz I am no women's libber. I just refuse to have anyone stomp over me. I will keep trying to do what I believe in. If I am wrong, I will apologize.'

— Lucy Crow, businesswoman, board member of Bethel Native Corp.
Bethel

JOURNAL

Marika Partridge:

'an agent for change'

Twenty-seven-year-old Marika Partridge helped create Sitka's public radio station alternative, Raven Radio.

She had come to Alaska in 1976, landed in Juneau, and volunteered at the public radio station. She got interested in a public radio station for Sitka after moving there in 1979. There had been previous attempts, but none with the commitment and energy to get a station started.

Partridge had both. On February 22, 1982, Raven Radio went on the air in Sitka. Today it has some 50 volunteers and a paid staff of eight — including program director Marika Partridge.

She was born in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1955, and spent her childhood traveling about the world in a military family. She lived in Iceland, the Philippines and Taiwan, and has traveled in East Africa.

...

I am really a community activist; I got that from my mother.

Here at the station, I am able to draw on the community, to try and meet the needs of the community and to involve a lot of local musicians.

I really see radio as an agent for change; you have the option of reaching the entire community. Until we came on the air Sitka had one radio station, now there is an alternative. It is a real happening place — pulling all these volunteers together, it is really something to have worked for something and to bring creative minds together. We really have a huge chance to change the ideas in the community. ○

'I guess some of my biggest struggles were being poor and fighting so much alcoholism in my family. I went to school on a G.I. Bill. It is a good thing I didn't know I was poor, when I was; we would eat fish three times a week, sometimes only flour and water.'

— Isabella Brady, program director, Alaska Native Brotherhood
Sitka

JOURNAL

Della Keats:

'we need a calm day, a happy day'

From urban hospitals to rural clinics, Alaskans know Della Keats as one who possesses a special "power" for healing the sick.

The 74-year-old Inupiat woman discourages mystification of her work; her methods require neither the secrecy of the shaman nor the technological wizardry of modern doctors. Della's power springs from a mixture unfamiliar to most modern individuals: a wide experience, a rich heritage and a deep and tested faith.

Her prescriptions for wellness are those used by Eskimo people before contact with white ways. They involve a high level of intimacy with her patients. She works virtually non-stop, and is seeking trainees to carry on the Inupiat ways of wellness.

• • •

I love to teach the people. I don't want to keep something secret by myself. I want everybody to know. Try to show it, what I've done. I don't want to get just lost.

I'm an old lady now, but from the beginning I always ask anything that I could learn. Momma used to tell me to teach people what I've done. I tell them not to forget what they learned from their grandparents. It's been so good to me. What the mother use for healing, I always tell them to keep on using it. Not get drugs from hospital.

When I was raised, happy all the time, no accidents, no worriness. Happy to make a living outdoors. These old people in our culture, when somebody gets sick, they are helping each other. When a person have fresh animal, he eat, and he give it away to the people. But now, when you have no money, nothing.

Try to be happy all the time, try not to hurt anybody. You can hurt others. It's just like an egg. That you keep, not to crack it, not to drop it, because it's easy to break. If a person comes to you for help, make soft questions to him. That way he'll love you, and you'll love him. We will be happy like in early days. Not unhappy.

All my life I wanted to let them know. We need a calm day, a happy day all the time.

— Contributed by Libby Roderick

'One of the biggest shocks of my life was when I discovered white men are not gods.'

— Jewel Jones, municipal Director of Social Services
Anchorage

JOURNAL

Not too long ago I traveled to Fairbanks and happened to meet, while I was there, a couple who were the adoptive parents of a 2-year-old. They told me that their child was not developing normally because he was a "fetal alcohol syndrome" baby. In other words, his mother was drunk so much during her pregnancy that the baby was seriously damaged.

But, that little boy's parents told me, there is a wonderful state program called the Infant Learning Program, through which retarded or physically handicapped infants and their parents can get counseling and training right from birth. Because of that program their son had made far more progress than had been thought possible at his birth, and his parents had gained the skills and knowledge necessary to understand his problems and help him try to overcome them.

I just glowed, because that state program exists partly through my efforts.

When I was in the legislature a woman invited me to visit a small program — an infant learning program — where she was a teacher in Anchorage. It was based on the recent recognition by professionals who work with retarded children that retarded and physically handicapped babies, just like normal babies, are more receptive to learning during the first three years of their life than at any other time. Rather than let these babies lie in their cribs until they are "old enough to train" a few organizations around the country had started working with them from birth, teaching them things like how to grasp things, how to balance themselves, and to respond to voices.

When I saw the babies in Anchorage and heard of their progress from parents and teachers and read about the success of other infant learning programs, I decided every retarded or handicapped baby in Alaska should have the opportunity that those babies in Anchorage were having.

So I introduced a bill in the legislature and pushed and prodded and cajoled and shepherded it through to passage. Three years later I met those parents of the fetal alcohol syndrome baby in Fairbanks and found I — though their baby had not even been born when I got the bill passed — had made a positive difference in their lives. One person can make a difference, and that difference can live from generation to generation.

(Thank you, Diane Brelsford, for caring enough about those infants to get a legislator interested.)

That's all very well, you may say. Of course you can make a difference if you're in the legislature. But what if you're a housewife — taking care of small children all day — who sees a problem but doesn't know any important people and doesn't sit on any boards or commissions or committees.

That was exactly my situation when I first came to Alaska 23 years ago. I got my start in "public life" when I was appointed to a committee after I sounded off about a community problem at a party.

(Thank you, Joe Josephson, for seeing in me someone who could contribute.)

From then on, one concern and level of involvement followed another until 15 years later I found myself (somewhat to my surprise, for I had never plotted a course) in the legislature.

(Thank you, Joe Rudd, Gene Guess, Willard Bowman, Bill Egan, Elvera Voth, Cliff Groh, Emil Notti, Genie Chance, Jay Hammond and Bill Sheffield for counseling me, for prodding me, and for giving me opportunities.)

There is a point to all these thank-yous, and that is that no one ever solves community problems alone. You need help, allies and mentors all along the way. Choose them well! They will make a great difference in your ability to learn and grow and be successful.

A lot of people are discouraged about being able to accomplish anything in their communities. They see a problem on one side and non-responsive elected officials, bureaucracies and regulations on the other. What's the use of trying?, they think.

Frankly, there is no use, unless you are willing to do the hard work necessary to bring about change. The beauty of our form of government is that one citizen can make a difference, but the corollary to that is that you have to work hard to do it. That one citizen must be knowledgeable about the issue she is addressing (this means lots of research and organizing of materials); she must be prepared to offer workable solutions to the problem she has identified (more research, and some brainstorming with allies); she must learn who has the power to make the change she is seeking and what channels she must go through to get a hearing with that person (150 phone calls); she must persuade that person (a mixture of thorough knowledge of the subject, good will, unflappability and determination well practiced, should do the trick).

Most of all, she must be flexible but persistent in the face of dead ends and non-responsiveness. One of my favorite sayings is, "There's always another way to skin the cat," and many's the time I have muttered it to myself as I emerged from a discouraging meeting.

But nothing feels so good as the success that comes at the end of all that hard work. It wasn't only for the sake of that baby in Fairbanks that I glowed when I heard about his success in the infant learning program. I felt proud of myself, too, and that's a nice reward at the end of some hard work for your community.

— Lisa Rudd

Lisa Rudd is a former state legislator who is now Alaska Commissioner of Administration.

'To give of yourself in some way, that is your gift.'

— Lois Irvin, community activist
Homer

JOURNAL

Commissioners' Comments . . .

I am pleased to have had the opportunity to work for recognition of the contributions women have made and are making.

I can honestly admit that the most exciting and rewarding aspect of working for the commission is knowing that young women across our state are being recognized as leaders and that I have had the opportunity to help make this happen.

— Katie Hurley, executive director
Commission on the Status of Women

I came to the commission already armed with many ideas about what needed to be done to change the status of women in Alaska. They came not only from a lifetime's experience as a woman, but also from my research with rural and urban women in Alaska and from doing the major part of the research and writing for the Status of Women in Alaska Report commissioned by the legislature in 1977. If I had to name one priority, it was to help organize women in all parts of Alaska so they could identify and article their needs and contribute to solutions to their problems.

— Dorothy Jones
Eagle River

When the commission was formed I was a nursing mother, frustrated with the isolation and seemingly low opinion other people had of the profession I had so proudly chosen. . . . On the commission, we have listened to many women's stories; we have tried to break down barriers that stood in the way of women reaching their goals.

I have gained immeasurably from being a part of this process. To be a part of an enormous network of women across the state has given me much strength and a sense of purpose.

— Barbara Dale
Juneau

As the Department of Law representative, I feel that I have made some contributions to the commission in the legal area . . . .

I also feel, however, that I gained more from being on the commission than I contributed. I made several friends and gained quite a few insights into what women around the state are thinking and are concerned about. I also came to the realization that although there are a lot of problems for women in this state, we can be effective in beginning to solve those problems.

— Mary Anne Henry
Ketchikan

Being the daughter of a Tlingit woman and raised in a Tlingit village, I was surrounded by strong, hard-working, competent women. The women of my region have been the backbone of our people's movement for equality since it began and they remain so today.

My appointment to, and my work on, the commission are a reflection of Alaska Native women's desire to plan their futures and to develop lifestyles that reflect their choices of innovation and tradition.

— Evalee Azar
Anchorage

Personally, I came onto the commission without the language, the vocabulary many feminists use. I have been able to understand, accept and challenge, when appropriate, this new way of thinking. My whole awareness level has broadened immensely. Today, I have a bond with many women from varied regions and backgrounds.

— *Roxane Lee*
Petersburg

The ability to effect political change is the true measure of the tremendous impact of the feminist movement. Being involved in that process — serving on the commission, working with the domestic violence network, grassroots organizing — has been an extraordinary personal experience. Activism is its own reward!

— *Carla Timpone*
Juneau

Rural women's needs, issues and concerns are apparent from the reports of the regional women's conferences. Even now as I write this, I am in Anchorage, pregnant and waiting to deliver my second baby. I sit here and men fly to the moon; I am dismayed at the lack of quality and accessibility to health care. I am here alone while my husband stays at home in the village with our daughter. Nome is the closest hospital to our village but they do not have an obstetrician there so I had to travel to Anchorage. I am on the subcommittee for health issues on the commission. We intend to address some of the health needs of women in rural areas.

— *Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry*
Shaktoolik

I'll never forget the spirit of excitement and energy . . .

My greatest satisfaction, though, has come from the many friends I've come to know and work with from all over the state. I've seen women gain confidence, experience and success, which I believe will make it easier for the next person.

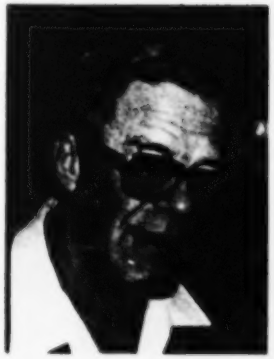
Won't it be wonderful when people's talents are recognized, regardless of their sex, and only the most talented people in the world of both sexes are working on resolving the world's problems?

— *Barbara Schuhmann*
Fairbanks

I feel privileged to work with a group of women who are so outstanding in so many different ways. Working to achieve equal rights on all levels for women is a tremendous goal and one I'm proud to be associated with.

There is still a great deal yet to be accomplished before "equality" is achieved for women. The commission has done a remarkable job in bringing inequities to the public forum and I'm sure it will continue to do so in the future.

— *Father James Poole*
Nome



As a public servant on the commission, my awareness of discriminatory practices against women at all levels has been sharpened, particularly with respect to employment and matters relating to the family.

I have been exposed to other areas which demonstrate the need for further education and changes. I will continue to be a visible commissioner and speak out and work to resolve these inadequacies.

— *Pat Berkley*
Anchorage

A tribute to women elected to the Alaska Legislature

1937: 13th Territorial Legislature
Rep. Nell Scott.....(D) Seldovia

1941: 15th Territorial Legislature
Rep. Crystal S. Jenne.....(D) Juneau

1943: 16th Territorial Legislature
Rep. Crystal S. Jenne.....(D) Juneau
Rep. Alaska S. Linck.....(D) Fairbanks

1945: 17th Territorial Legislature
Rep. Bess Cross.....(D) Kotzebue
Rep. Alaska S. Linck.....(D) Fairbanks

1947: 18th Territorial Legislature
Rep. Thelma Engstrom.....(R) Juneau
Rep. Anita Garnick.....(R) Juneau

1949: 19th Territorial Legislature
Rep. Essie R. Dale.....(D) Fairbanks
Rep. Doris M. Barnes.....(R) Wrangell
Rep. Amelia A. Gundersen.....(D) Ketchikan
Sen. Anita Garnick.....(I) Juneau

1951: 20th Territorial Legislature
Rep. Doris M. Barnes.....(R) Wrangell
Rep. Amelia A. Gundersen.....(D) Ketchikan
Sen. Anita Garnick.....(D) Juneau

1953: 21st Territorial Legislature
Rep. Edith R. Bullock.....(R) Kotzebue
Rep. Barbara D. Dimock.....(R) Anchorage
Rep. Dorothy M. Prior.....(R) Anchorage
Sen. Doris Barnes.....(R) Wrangell

1955: 22nd Territorial Legislature
Rep. Edith R. Bullock.....(R) Kotzebue
Rep. Irene E. Ryan.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Dora M. Sweeney.....(D) Juneau
Sen. Doris Barnes.....(R) Wrangell

1957: 23rd Territorial Legislature
Rep. Dorothy Awes.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Helen Fischer.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Irene E. Ryan.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Dora M. Sweeney.....(D) Juneau
Sen. Edith R. Bullock.....(R) Kotzebue

1959-60 1st Alaska Legislature
Rep. Helen M. Fischer.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Blanche L. McSmith.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Dora Sweeney.....(D) Juneau
Sen. Irene E. Ryan.....(D) Anchorage

1961-62 2nd Alaska Legislature
Rep. Grace Johnson.....(R) Nome
Rep. Dora M. Sweeney.....(D) Juneau

1963-64 3rd Alaska Legislature
Rep. Dora M. Sweeney.....(D) Juneau
Sen. Mildred Banfield.....(R) Juneau

1965-66 4th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Lucille Pinkerton.....(D) Ketchikan

1967-68 5th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Mildred H. Banfield.....(R) Juneau

1969-70 6th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Mildred H. Banfield.....(R) Juneau
Rep. Helen D. Beirne.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Helen M. Fischer.....(D) Anchorage
Sen. Kathryn Poland.....(D) Kodiak

1971-72 7th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Mildred H. Banfield.....(R) Juneau
Rep. Genie Chance.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Helen M. Fischer.....(D) Anchorage
Sen. Kathryn Poland.....(D) Kodiak

1973-74 8th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Mildred H. Banfield.....(R) Juneau
Rep. Helen D. Beirne.....(R) Spenard
Rep. Genie Chance.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Helen M. Fischer.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Jo Ann Miller.....(R) Anchorage
Sen. Kathryn Poland.....(D) Kodiak

1975-76 9th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Helen D. Beirne.....(R) Spenard
Rep. Thelma Buchholdt.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Helen M. Fischer.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Brenda T. Itta.....(D) Barrow
Rep. Ramona M. Kelley.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Kathryn Ostrosky.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Lisa Rudd.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Susan Sullivan.....(D) Anchorage
Sen. Genie Chance.....(D) Anchorage
Sen. Kathryn Poland.....(D) Kodiak

1977-78 10th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Thelma Buchholdt.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Lisa Rudd.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Sarah J. Smith.....(D) Fairbanks
Sen. Kay Poland.....(D) Kodiak

1979-80 11th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Ramona L. Barnes.....(R) Anchorage
Rep. Margaret Branson.....(R) Cooper Landing
Rep. Thelma Buchholdt.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Joyce Munson.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Sarah J. Smith.....(D) Fairbanks
Sen. Bettye Fahrenkamp.....(D) Fairbanks
Sen. Arliss Sturgulewski.....(R) Anchorage

1981-82 12th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Ramona Barnes.....(R) Anchorage
Rep. Thelma Buchholdt.....(D) Anchorage
Rep. Bette M. Cato.....(D) Valdez
Rep. Sarah J. Smith.....(D) Fairbanks
Sen. Bettye Fahrenkamp.....(D) Fairbanks
Sen. Arliss Sturgulewski.....(R) Anchorage

1983-84 13th Alaska Legislature
Rep. Ramona L. Barnes.....(R) Anchorage
Rep. Bette Cato.....(D) Valdez
Rep. Adelheid Herrmann.....(D) Naknek
Rep. Barbara Lacher.....(R) Palmer
Rep. Mae Tischer.....(R) Anchorage
Sen. Bettye Fahrenkamp.....(D) Fairbanks
Sen. Jan Faiks.....(R) Anchorage
Sen. Arliss Sturgulewski.....(R) Anchorage

Alaska Commission on the Status of Women
3601 C Street, Suite 742
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907) 561-4227

Members of the Commission:

Barbara Schuhmann, chair, Fairbanks
Barbara Dale, vice chair, Juneau
Evalee Azar, Anchorage
Pat Berkley, Anchorage
Mary Anne Henry, Ketchikan
Dorothy Jones, Eagle River
Roxane Lee, Petersburg
Father James Poole, S.J., Nome
Carla Timpone, Juneau
Teresa Sockpealuk-Perry, Shaktoolik

State of Alaska

Bill Sheffield, Governor
Stephen McAlpine, Lt. Governor